

international
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São Paulo Forum, Montevideo, June 1995:

**Where is the
Latin left going?**



6-10 June 1995

14th World Congress of the 4th International

The Congress had four major debates. The first was a general discussion on the global situation organised around three themes — globalisation and the crisis of capitalism, the major political tendencies of the current period, and the restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe. The second debate represented an evaluation of the current situation and the perspectives in Latin America, with special attention to the evolution of the Castrist regime in Cuba. The third debate covered the general tendencies of the socio-political situation in Western Europe, with special attention on the state of the left and the response to the European Union. The fourth and final debate concerned the strategies and problems of construction of revolutionary parties and an International in the new global period.

Specific discussions, working group meetings and commissions covered feminist activities, youth work, ecology, solidarity campaigns with Bosnia and Chiapas (Mexico) and the campaign to abolish third world debt. The congress also examined and decided on a number of organisational problems concerning the status of various groups in various countries. Congress also noted the division of the forces of the International in Germany and Mexico, and looked for ways to organise co-operation between the parties concerned.

The collapse of Stalinism and the continuing capitalist crisis (corresponding to the extension of the long wave of crisis which began in the 1970s) has contradictory effects. Myths and illusions connected to the restoration of capitalism in the post-Stalinist societies have dissipated, faced with the actually existing market economy. But reactions to the socio-economic crisis, in this period of loss of credibility of the socialist project, all too often take the form of reactionary tendencies of an ethnic, nationalist, racial or religious character. Hence the urgent need to rebuild a world-wide movement of anti-capitalist struggle, within the socialist perspective, taking account of the recomposition of the workers'

movement which is underway as a result of the double failure of social democracy and Stalinism.

The political disorder in the ranks of the anti-capitalist left, in the context of a global balance of forces dominated by imperialism, has resulted in many political, even ideological capitulations. But it has also led to a spectacular overcoming of the sectarian traditions generated by the existence of Stalinism, which have taken root in the anti-capitalist left over the decades. Regroupments of forces determined to learn the lessons of the historical abomination that was Stalinism and to continue, against the winds and the tides, to fight against capitalism are being realised in a number of countries so large that it is legitimate to extrapolate a general tendency in the new period.

This process can take a variety of forms. In some cases there are wide regroupings of anti-capitalist forces where the major element comes mainly, but not exclusively from the decomposition of Stalinism. In other cases there are narrower regroupments of tendencies which are based in the mutation under way inside the revolutionary left. Sometimes this takes the form of the creation of new political formations organised on the basis of democratic pluralism, respecting the diversity of the component parts and their individual identities, yet founded on the basis of unified action and collective discipline, and acting both on the electoral level and in the field of general social and political struggles.

In all the countries where one or the other of these possibilities exists, the organisations of the Fourth International are ready to be part of the regroupment process. We consider this as an important step towards the recomposition of the anti-capitalist left on a world scale. At the international level, the Fourth International is an active participant in regroupment, bringing with it the advantages of a long tradition of combat against capitalism and Stalinism. ★

Participants, delegates, guests and greetings

The 150 participants included representatives of organisations and groups linked to the International in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada/Quebec, Denmark, Ecuador, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Morocco, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Senegal, South Africa, the Spanish state, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, Uruguay, and the USA.

Organisations and groups in Algeria, Bolivia, Chile, Congo, Guadeloupe, Israeli state, Jordan, Martinique, and Mauritius could not attend, many for financial reasons, others for visa problems.

Guests included representatives of the Democratic Socialist Party of Australia, Gauches Unis (United Lefts) and the Tri-Continental Centre (both from Belgium), the Brazilian Workers Party (PT), Solidarity (USA), Zutik (Basque country) Lutte ouvrière (France) People's Communist Party, MLCB and Bisig (all of the Philippines), Russian Party of Labour, Communist Refoundation (Italy) and the African Party for Democracy and Socialism (PADS, Senegal).

Congress also received a number of written greetings, including that of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) branch in the occupied territories ★.

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Letter from the editors,

Dear readers

After rising 10% in the first half of this year, the number of subscribers to *International Viewpoint* has since fallen back to its January level. This may be because a number of readers will only re-subscribe after the summer holidays. Some readers may be exasperated by the severe printing and postal delays in March-May, when we produced the magazine in the Czech Republic. These problems have now been resolved, but the dip in subscription levels is a worrying sign. Particularly since we have reduced the price of the half-year subscription in a number of countries in an attempt to attract new readers. Surprisingly, the strongest increases in sales figures come from countries where we have maintained old prices.

This suggests that there is only one way to sell left-wing magazines like *International Viewpoint*. Via our existing readers. Please share the magazine with your friends and comrades. Photocopy articles for fellow students who are interested in a particular country. Talk to them about the contents of the latest issue. Then ask them to buy a copy. Or to subscribe.

There isn't really any other way to increase *International Viewpoint's* circulation to a level where we will be able to survive without subsidy.

In the meantime, we thank all those in Europe, Japan and North America who have taken out a solidarity subscription. Thanks to your generosity we now distribute some 40% of our print run to militants and political prisoners in the third world. The other side of this solidarity is reflected in the richness of materials produced by our (unpaid) correspondents, from Senegal to Palestine and Brazil.

Please use the next few months to find one or two new readers for *International Viewpoint*, or for our sister publications in Spanish, German and French. And don't forget to subscribe or re-subscribe yourself !

The editors

PS As in previous years, *International Viewpoint* will not be published in August. Issue #269, will be published on 1 September 1995. The dossier will cover economic and political developments in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. We will also report on the explosion of opposition to the French nuclear test programme.

Correction: Militant result in Scotland

In Britain's municipal elections in May 1995 the Militant group won 6% of the vote in one Glasgow constituency where they have a relatively popular councillor. In that month's issue of *International Viewpoint* (#267) we incorrectly reported this fact as a Militant score of 6% over the whole of Scotland.

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BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE

Where is the Latin Ameri

Sixty-five organizations, movements and political parties from Latin America and the Caribbean which belong to the Sao Paulo Forum met for a fifth time, from May 25 to 28, in Montevideo, Uruguay. As *Alfonso Moro explains*, the context in which the meeting takes place includes the poor results obtained

by the left in the many elections which spanned the continent between 1993 and 1995; the need to put forward an initial democratic and popular proposal to confront the economic crisis which is shaking the region; and the need to redesign left politics after the events of the last two years.

As a point of reference it is necessary to remember that on July, 1993 over 100 organizations from the region met in Havana, Cuba, for the fourth meeting of the Sao Paulo Forum¹ Given the political and social conjuncture at that point the Assembly focused on the possibilities of the left coming into government in different countries (Brazil, Mexico, El Salvador, and Uruguay) as well as on the crisis of the Cuban Revolution. When the hypotheses of victory were not confirmed — despite the fact that in general left currents obtained the best results in at least 25 years — the fifth Assembly could have been the place to draw a clear and profound balance of the events. Yet, with some exceptions, this subject was bypassed in the discussions which took place at the Assembly. How can this be explained? To answer that question, even only with an outline, we have to place ourselves in the debates which accompanied the electoral processes. Two major tendencies spanned in one way or another the Latin American organizations. One current, which was struggling to win office, was oriented towards a politics of “capacity to govern, openness, and no social confrontation” while the other current, to be sure in a minority, pursued social mobilization and a radical discourse of confrontation.²

With hindsight the results confirm that

the second orientation was correct, and that it should be the basis for the political activity of the left from now on. But, as the discussions demonstrated, the majority of the organizations present in Montevideo chose to remain on the terrain of the institutional and parliamentarian advances, that is on discussions about the number of deputies, senators, mayors and governors which the left now has, without going to the root of the electoral defeats. As I myself argued, *“the principal problem of the left has been its incapacity to transform the existing social polarization in the different countries into a process of radicalization and self-organization among the sectors of the population which saw in the left a possibility for change. When a misguided vision of the ‘ability to govern’ imposed itself, social mobilization was undervalued as the central motor towards victory, and from there in many cases the participation of the left ended up being absorbed by a fuzzy electoralist dynamic without a clear perspective.”*

This analysis does not minimize the utilization of the state apparatus by the dominant classes in all countries to prevent the triumph of the left; rather, it seeks to underscore that participation in these processes took place without taking into account one central factor. The left displayed a lack of understanding — not to say a certain naivety — about what was at stake. In the face of the crisis which now plagues several countries of the subcontinent, we can expect a worsening of the tendencies which are already in place towards authoritarianism and anti-democratic rule, as the cases of Brazil, Uruguay, Mexico, Peru, Venezuela and Argentina demonstrate.³ The left is acting in these situations as if it were paralysed. Mexico, so close and yet so far...

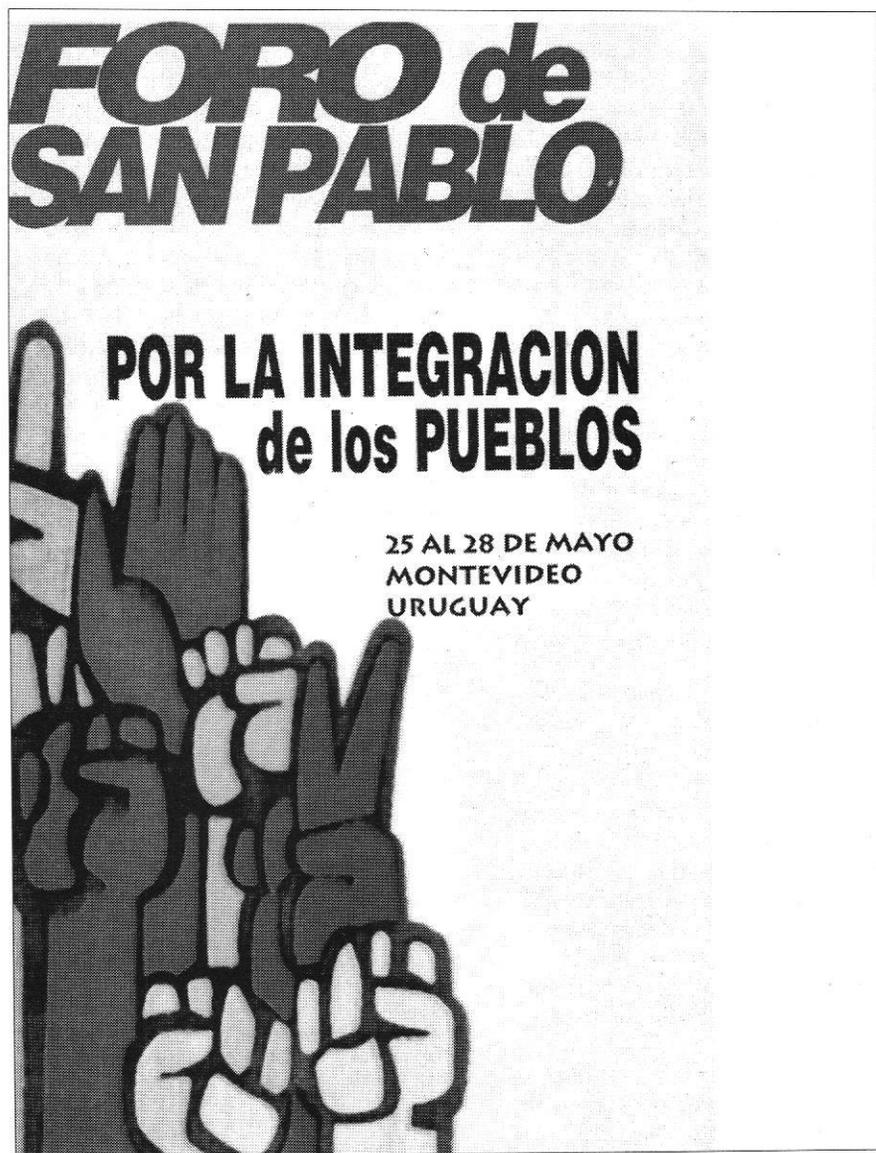
The crisis of the neo-liberal model which became evident as a result of the

devaluation of the Mexican peso last December, which generated what is known as the “tequila effect”, was one of the principal subjects of the Assembly. Everyone agreed that the crisis signals the exhaustion of the economic model imposed for at least 15 years (depending on the country). The need to put forward a proposal which meets the immediate challenges posed by the blows which the populations of the subcontinent are suffering is more urgent than ever, and will only emerge if the left currents are capable of closing the gap which separates them from the social movements. In that respect, even though the final declaration of the Assembly brings up the subject in general terms, it must be said that this is without doubt one of the elements which define the type of Forum that is being built. In other words, who are our interlocutors?

Let us explain. The Socialist International, the COPPAL, the Latin American Socialist Coordinadora, the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) and... the president of the Interamerican Development Bank were invited to this event. Even though only the COPPAL answered the call, without doubt behind the call there is a predominant vision of becoming a sort of institutional left opposition, capable of conducting a “dialogue” with the makers of our crisis (as is the case with the president of the IDB) perhaps to convince them that the economic policies followed are not the best. The subject is of great importance and must be interpreted in the context of other options chosen by the organizations belonging to the Working Group (a sort of leadership) of the Forum. In fact, in addition to the organizations already mentioned, the Working Group accepted unanimously the presence, as an “observer”, of the Mexican Institutional



an left heading ?



Revolutionary Party (PRI), a state party which has ruled that country for over 60 years and which is today in the midst of a terminal crisis of unpredictable consequences. At the same time, the Working Group "forgot" to invite the National Democratic Convention of Mexico and the Zapatista Army of National liberation (EZLN). Those of us who denounced the presence of the PRI in the Forum were branded as "intransigent", "bureaucratic" and "undemocratic". Surprising accusations, especially when they came in several instances from ex-leaders of the region's remaining Communist parties. But beyond this point,

the central problem was that the absolute majority which attended the Forum decided to keep an eloquent silence, which makes clear that many of these organizations prioritize their relations with the PRI above the support to the Mexican popular movement headed today by the EZLN.

One of the Representatives of the Uruguayan Frente Amplio (Broad Front) (See *International Viewpoint*, #263, March 1995), a member of the Artiguista Vanguard, attempted to justify the acceptance of the PRI as an observer through pointing to the observer status granted to Herri Batasuna, the Basque

organization identified with the positions of the paramilitary organisation ETA. Beyond the fact that we do not share the methods of ETA, it is clear that there is no ground for comparison between an organization like HB and the Mexican PRI.

The "Mexican case" made clear that the struggle of the Zapatistas is considered a "regional" matter by the political left of Latin America, which explains, contrary to what one may expect, why the examples of solidarity with the Zapatistas are more frequent in Europe and the United States than in Latin America. This lack of understanding does not allow the left of Latin America to see that the heart of the project of the Mexican PRI, which is the project for all of Latin America, lies north of the Mexican border, and that the lack of initiatives can only strengthen the Mexican government and its imperialist inspirers. This can be fatal, because a defeat of the democratic and Zapatista movements in Mexico will carry a heavy price for all of the Latin American left.

The Forum discussed the economic, social and political situation of Latin America and the Caribbean since the Fourth Assembly, and evaluated the process of regional integration. Discussions concerning the current situation were also characterized by clashes between very different visions.

Let us take one simple example. A few weeks ago, Bolivia (another prime example of neo-liberalism) was shaken by a strike headed by teachers, which was joined by miners, women, students, and coca producers from the Chapare region, who refused to accept the policies which the Sánchez de Lozada government is attempting to impose (see brief report in *International Viewpoint* # 267, June 1995). This wave of protests was stopped by a state of emergency, the detention and imprisonment of more than 300 leaders of social movements and the suspension of constitutional guarantees. The declaration of the state of emergency was carried out with the support of the official majority in the parliament, and explicitly defended by chancellor Aranibar, a member of the Movimiento Bolivia Libre (Free Bolivia movement), an organization which up to the Fifth Assembly was a member of the



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Lean Production: A Capitalist Utopia?

by Tony Smith

◆ Innovative ways of organising production and marketing are eliminating antagonisms between capital and labour, between producers and consumers, and between different companies. "Lean production" is uniting companies, workers and consumers in the harmonious pursuit of common interests.

◆ Too good to be true? Of course it is! In this pamphlet, Tony Smith analyses the current transformation of relationships between employers and employees, between producers and consumers, and between different firms, and shows that, fundamentally they have not altered the nature of capitalism.

◆ The author goes on to show how a socialist economy based on grassroots participation and democratic coordination could match the dynamism of lean production, and keep lean production's broken promises of cooperation and harmony.

Tony Smith is professor of philosophy at Iowa State University in the U.S.A. and an advisory editor of the magazine Against the Current

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Working Group of the São Paulo. Forum. Evidently, the extreme nature of the Bolivian situation forced the Forum to take a position concerning the question of whether organizations which are responsible for repression against fighters for social justice in their countries can be part of the Forum.

Unfortunately the answer was in the same direction as the answer to the "Mexican case." In the name of the "broadest possible unity" and in the need of showing that "we are democratic" the Movimiento Bolivia Libre was allowed to continue as a full member of the Forum, suffering no consequence other than a departure from the Working Group.

One may think, in the light of this decision, that an environment of broad pluralism, which seeks to privilege discussion over exclusion, prevails. But this is not the case. The Working Group refused to accept the Movimiento de Renovación Sandinista (Sandinista Renovation Movement, the split from the FSLN headed by Sergio Ramírez, Ernesto Cardenal, and Dora Mara Tellez) as a member in full standing. The MRS was vetoed by the FSLN (the current headed by Daniel Ortega). There is a double standard against which it is necessary to fight.

There have also been important events about which the Forum has remained silent — the war between Ecuador and Peru, the US invasion of Haiti, the state of emergency in Bolivia. The absence of clear positions is a matter of concern, because the events are of great importance, and their consequences are not confined to the present period. These key questions reflect the complex labyrinth which the democratic political forces, the anti-imperialists and the socialists of the region are traversing.

In the same Assembly, the rules of admission, the composition of the Working Group, and the mechanisms of coordination to be followed henceforth were modified. A sub-regional functioning structure was approved and a "Permanent Secretariat" established (in São Paulo). The utility of those measures will be seen in the coming months. Above all, they will put to the test our abilities to meet the enormous challenges facing us.

For objective reasons, the majority of the Forum focused on electoral activities in the recent past. But the closing of that period requires that we concentrate our efforts in closing the gaps which separate us from the social movements.

The participation of the PRI as an observer and the discussion which this generated leaves a central problem

unresolved. How wide should this organization of reflection and exchange open itself? Some say there should be no limits, and even proposed the idea that the (Right of center) Popular Party of the Spanish State (See *International Viewpoint* #264, March 1995) should join if it requests admission.

Our conception is very different. We do not have a sectarian vision, but we are still able to discern class interests. There are only two options for the São Paulo Forum. One is to retain a conservative attitude, without any commitment other than getting together at every Assembly and issuing declarations of good will, with a vision that international solidarity stops where the interests of each national organization begin. The other option is to dare to make a turn, recognizing the contributions made so far and the terrible difficulties that we face, but with the perspective of returning to the reality of the declaration of the first Forum celebrated in 1990. It is necessary to shake out the dangerous inertia which is moving us to behave as witnesses to history rather than as agents of history. This is the greatest challenge and, for our own modest part, we are determined to work starting now so that in 1996, when the Sixth Assembly takes place in El Salvador, we may help to find some answers. ★

Notes

1 See *Inprecor para América Latina* (Spanish-language sister publication to *International Viewpoint*) # 35, September 1993.

2 See "1994: avant et après" in *Inprecor* (French-language sister publication to *International Viewpoint*) # 384, October, 1994.

3 We are referring to the way in which the Cardoso government has confronted the strike of the oil workers in Brazil; the security law approved by the Uruguayan parliament; the policies of economic shock and open repression pursued by the dying Mexican government; the recent amnesty approved by Fujimori for the military responsible for murder and torture in Peru; the way in which the Caldera government is attempting to stop social mobilizations in Venezuela; and the decision by Menem to destroy what little remains of social security in Argentina.

4 Before the Fifth Assembly the members of this group were: the Brazilian PT, the FMLN of El Salvador, the FSLN of Nicaragua, the PCC of Cuba, the URNG of Guatemala, the PRD of Mexico, the Lavalas Movement of Haiti, the PRD of Panama, the United Left of Peru, the political parties forming the Frente Amplio in Uruguay (the FA decided to join the Forum as such before the Fifth Assembly), the Movimiento Bolivia Libre of Bolivia, and the Communist Party of Guadeloupe.

5 It must be said that unanimity in the Working Group was reached following the declaration of one of the members of the PRD of Mexico, who said he had no objection to the participation of the PRI.

Presentation of the Brazilian Workers' Party (PT)

Latin America has undergone important transformations since the last Sao Paulo Forum in Havana. Between July 1993 and May 1995, presidential and/or general elections were held in 14 Latin American countries. This process established some precedents.

In almost all the cases, forces of the left or center-left contested the elections with real possibilities of winning. In the majority of the elections, the contest was dominated by a right vs. (center-)left coalition. In spite of defeats, this is the best overall performance of the left in the history of Latin America.

This performance results from a prolonged crisis of social movements as well as the political renovation and organic recomposition of progressive parties and movements in the last ten years. The difficult conditions in which the left's program developed and its adverse electoral results did not diminish the strength of the Latin American left. On the contrary, the left continues to maintain a strong presence in society and continues to grow considerably in parliaments as well as in municipal and state governments. The left remains a decisive factor in countries throughout the region.

There are, however, enormous challenges ahead.

The left will have to be the voice of those who today have no voice, the excluded. It must simultaneously express the national, democratic aspirations of all socially organized sectors who oppose the savage organic re-insertion of Latin America into the new world (dis)order.

[...] In some countries — Mexico, Peru, Bolivia and particularly Brazil — the electoral debate revolved around the question of monetary stability. Victorious candidates defended neo-liberal adjustment plans, including:

- a strong program of privatization (or "flexibilization" in the Brazilian case) of state industries;
- a profound opening of capital and commercial markets to foreign investment;
- the deregulation of labor relations and social security systems.

In their discourse and policies, the neo-conservatives explicitly or implicitly defend the minimum state as a solution to the national-developmental model. This model, which was created in the 1930's, has been in crisis for more than 15 years.

necessary to combat inflation early in order to return to growth and then, much later, distribute the wealth.

Since these policies will only produce positive results in the medium to long term, social programs have been



**"The Workers' Party (The party without bosses):
For a workers' government!"**

Without attacking the root of the problem, neo-liberalism exploits the hostility of growing social sectors against an authoritarian, inefficient, bureaucratic and, above all, privatized state machine. Neo-liberalism proposes the total retreat of the state from the economy, which makes it impossible to implement social policies, especially in the areas of education, health, housing, transportation and welfare.

The traditional right and recent converts to its doctrines affirm that a generalization of market mechanisms (a paradoxical proposal in the highly oligopolized societies of Latin America) can correct real social distortions and give new vigor to Latin American countries through full integration into the world economy.

Rhetorically recognizing the depth of the social crisis Latin America is going through, neo-conservatives argue that it is

formulated to reduce the emergency impact of the crisis. The best known is the Mexican PRONASOL (See *International Viewpoint* #263, February 1995) which inspired the Comunidade Solidaria program of Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

[...] In these and other countries, the left criticized the socially excluding, economically anti-national and politically authoritarian character of the neo-liberal project. The left emphasized the need to first of all confront the question of social apartheid. With little or no success, the left offered alternative development projects that sought to reduce inflation, spark economic growth and redistribute wealth.

Recognizing that globalization is an objective phenomenon, the left sought to combine commercial openings and the need to attract foreign investments with



safeguards to guarantee national sovereignty.

In face of the concern for constructing alternatives, leftist national development projects did not always offer a level of depth and clarity necessary to overturn the ideological hegemony of neo-conservative positions. Such positions revealed an enormous capacity to penetrate even the popular classes.

Still perplexed by the crisis of centrally planned economic models or by the collapse of the social democratic welfare state, the left demonstrates little capacity to propose innovative, popularly backed solutions. This is a complex situation of economic, social and political transition in which one model of development enters into crisis without offering a replacement.

The defensive position of the left allowed the right to characterize resistance to neo-liberalism as a "corporative", "xenophobic" project hostile to modernity.

[...] The predictions for economic growth in Latin America indicate a decline. The GDP for the entire continent is expected to drop from 5% in 1994 to 2% in 1995.

In addition to slowed economic growth in a continent marked by gross social inequalities, it is worth noting that growth does not necessarily have a positive impact on employment. This phenomenon, which occurs in other parts of the world, has particularly grave consequences in Latin America.

To become "competitive", businesses were obliged to drastically reduce their expenses and the quality of services, making work more precarious. The new investments, with the processes of work and management techniques they introduce, are labor saving without having a favorable social impact.

This explains cases like Argentina,

where the economy grew 30 % in the last few years, yet the unemployment rate rose to 25%.

These new structural factors of higher unemployment, brought about by the general effects of macro-economic political models, increase social exclusion.

Statistics indicate a rise in the number of men and women living below the poverty line in Brazil and in a large part of Latin America.

[...] Politically, the implementation of this model has strong authoritarian implications, especially considering the precariousness of democratization in the majority of Latin American countries.

Though workers and other popular and democratic sectors participated extensively in the democratization process, it is strikingly clear that in almost all the

populists, complicates reform of the political system and further distorts the mechanisms of representation which are traditionally precarious in Latin America. The increased fragility of the majority of political parties is reflected in the absolute inconsistency of their programs (or in the fact that all of them resemble one another on a rhetorical level). This discredits mechanisms of representation.

The fact that advances in political democracy did not translate into better social conditions for the masses discredits politics and politicians involved in leftist organizations.

This highlights the fact that political democracy will be permanently threatened by the absence of economic and social democracy.

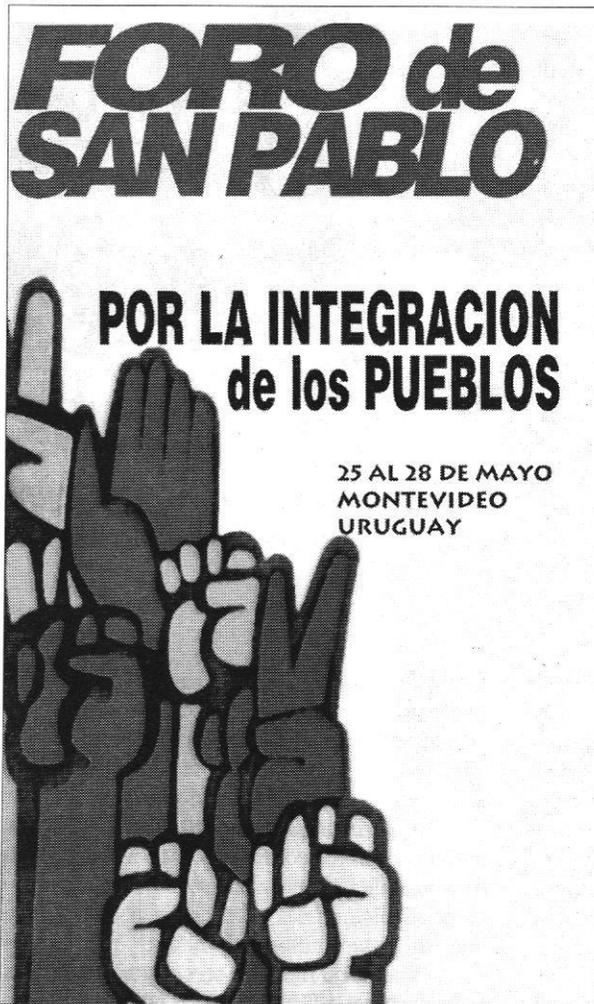
This situation strengthens the position of those who claim that politics is implicitly perverse. It opens a space for outsiders and opportunists and creates a technocratic conception of power that implies the exclusion of the masses.

[...] The events of December 1994 in Mexico clearly expose the limits of a model that is considered a paradigm for the rest of Latin America and offer the Latin American left multiple and complex lessons. Even though the Mexican crisis confirmed the expectations of the left and, above all, demonstrated the fragility of neo-liberal adjustment projects, there are no reasons to celebrate.

First, because the main victims of the austerity measures adopted to exorcise the crisis are the working class and excluded sectors of society. The crisis will result in sectoral pay squeezes, recession, unemployment and a new inflationary boom. The rich, as always, have already been compensated and can survive without any great difficulty.

Second, because the consequences of the Mexican collapse and other similar collapses are not necessarily an advance for the struggle of the working class and democratic sectors. Historically, experience has taught the left a lot about the dangers of a

catastrophic vision, a tendency to deduce the possibilities of political advance from the crisis of capitalism. Experience has demonstrated many times that a serious crisis of the economic model can lead to authoritarian forms of power, if not to open counter-revolution. ★



transitions to democracy compromises were reached with old dominant groups. Some of these groups, "recycled" for new democratic times, continue to exercise power. The presence of these groups in power, in some cases associated with original sectors of the left, center-left or

[Extracts from the] Presentation by the Communist Party of Cuba's Delegation to the 5th Sao Paulo Forum
The Evolution of the Economic, Social, and Political Situation of Latin America and the Caribbean

Brothers and Sisters,

1. In order to outline the evolution... of the economic, social, and political situation of Latin America and the Caribbean which has transpired between the fourth and this fifth meeting of the Sao Paulo Forum, we are obliged to refer to certain phenomena and processes that for reasons of time we will not be able to analyze in depth. For this reason, it is indispensable that we place inside this context our previously discussed perspectives.

2. To broach the problems of our region, it is necessary to confront two misconceptions. The first misconception is that the subcontinent is progressing toward economic development and social justice. The other misconception affirms that the continent is moving toward the consolidation of democracy.

3. With so much at stake, it is important to have a clear understanding of the decade of the 1980s. The drainage of net financial resources and the transference of Latin American and Caribbean goods and services to the export sector created recession, hyper-inflation, stagnation in employment and per capita consumption, a decline in production and the weakening of broad sectors of production, financial speculation, and the concentration of property and revenue in

the hands of the few. These phenomena led to an increase in poverty and marginalization as never before.

4. The financial collapse and fragility of the governments facilitated the transfer of ownership of the means of production to the creditors. They honoured trans-national dominion above their countries' economies and they amplified foreign influence over domestic politics. Special mention deserves to be given to the "Brady Plan," a mechanism designed to save North American banks from the devaluation of their loans and "to capture" the most profitable productive sectors of Latin America and the Caribbean. Little by little this plan contributed to the growing regional foreign debt, which by the end of 1994 reached \$534 US billion. This aggravated the situations of the debtor nations, which couldn't count on financial activities to back up the present "mortgage."

5. Paralleling this was indiscriminate commercial opening and deregulation, which fed the appetites of the international financial system. The result of this was hundreds of billions of dollars withdrawn from local businesses and production and put at the disposal of more speculative gambles to obtain easier profits.

6. Mediating this arithmetical magic of macroeconomic incantations a number of institutions now announce the end of what was called in Latin America and the Caribbean the "Lost Decade." This created a situation in which two-thirds of the regions' inhabitants fell into classifications like "unviable," a strange

subhuman status.

7. The reality of the subcontinent is that the financial "boom" was destined to mean that resources were to be sent outside the region. This has created a fictitious process which contributed to international monetary reserves and which was financed in our region by deficit commercial and fiscal activities. This was artificially sustained by imports, resulting in the loss of our ability to control inflation and stimulating local bourgeoisies into hyper-consumerism by means of credit channels, which produced a model of supposed economic growth financed by speculation.

8. The result of sponsoring speculative creations is expressed in growing economic deformation. The impulse for privatization and marginalization of economies has accentuated unemployment and curtailed real growth. It has enhanced the impulse toward marginalization... annulled the competitive capacity of the national productive capacity, accelerated de-industrialization, increased the foreign debt, augmented the commercial deficit, degraded the conditions of life for the majority, deepened the concentration of property in the hands of a few, and in all but a few cases, eliminated all possibility of technical progress and development for our countries.

9. Combined with the socio-economic phenomena already mentioned is the question of whether Latin America and the Caribbean can effectively encounter a process of consolidation of democracy. Is democracy able to coexist with inequality and injustice? Are we able to have democracy in countries that are every day

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more dependent and less sovereign?

10. In order to be able to answer this question, it is important to separate ourselves from a logic imposed on us which says that we must accept a subordinate role within the new system of international relations.

11. The principal elements that conform to this "New World Order" are the implantation of a code of values and conduct destined to impose on all the nations a political model that facilitates foreign domination and guarantees limited sovereignty and the right of intervention. They justify intervention in international questions and broaden coercive mechanisms which impose the interests of the powerful and amplify sanctions against those who do not obey.

12. The proponents of the "New World Order" would like to legitimize these norms of behavior in the same way that international financial organizations would like to impose restrictions in the economic and social sphere. The combination of both make up pincers that restrict the sovereignty of our nations. In this manner they produce a dual process, one part of which is that they weaken those elements in our governments that are opposed to trans-national capital, while at the same time they aid and abet the repressive elements in those governments against the sectors most affected by the crisis.

13. In the case of our continent, with the motive of heightening social and political crisis and promoting violence in various places, the United States and the dominant elites in Latin America and the Caribbean worked hand in hand throughout the past decade in the creation of new mechanisms for preserving their interests, and especially to stop the reform and revitalization of the Organization of American States.

14. In a similar process, the "Latin America Summit," celebrated in Miami in December 1994, constituted the

culmination of the first step in the restructuring of the system of hemispheric relations, whose objectives have been: to consolidate and re-articulate a new design in the economic relations of the continent; to define a new collective security system; and to deepen the campaign to isolate the Cuban Revolution. Within this context, they produced the United States military intervention in Haiti, which constitutes a defining example of the new concept of "hemispheric security."

15. However, what is the relation between sovereignty and democracy? And how can they tout the claim that they are strengthening democracy while at the same time accentuating the process of the loss of sovereignty?

16. It is certainly not possible to compare the real political situation in Latin America and the Caribbean with the period of military dictatorships. Also, it would be erroneous to generalize about the political systems of all the countries of the region. It is a reality that the popular forces approve of the democratic spaces which exist for gathering forces and competing in conditions relatively less disadvantageous within the system.

17. Nevertheless, what has become dominant is a regional political panorama characterized by such practices as the elimination of a real choice among candidates, expensive electoral campaigns, manipulation of the mass media of communication, existence of "permanent authorities," "powers," unchallengeable elections, "indisputable polls", interference of the United States in the internal affairs of other nations, and influence of the armed forces in political life.

18. Far from advancing democracy, neo-liberalism contributes to unemployment and a decline in the level and quality of life for two-thirds of the population of our subcontinent. It forces popular sectors to accept calls for social pacts and other similar formulas which restrict the gains and democratic spaces achieved during years of struggle. Democratic spaces achieved during ???

19. The limitations of this political model and the effects of the socio-economic and political crisis are also defined by the dependent character of the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean, especially in this period of the loss of national sovereignty. A new form of permanent authority is coming to the fore, situated in the central banks, the

economic ministries, and other governmental institutions, whose political preconditions — through conventions and mediated agreements and in large part thorough "elected" government — is not subject to change and whose functionaries share the viewpoint of major commercial and financial institutions.

20. Now, if the political system has become a dead weight, if the difficulty of the socio-economic crisis is more than can be dealt with, and if the fundamental decisions that affect the subcontinent are predetermined by foreign interests, we must ask what real weight in fundamental decisions do voters have that affect the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean? What margin remains for the exercise of democracy?

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21. The answer is that we must support, on the one hand, the demand for universal suffrage, direct elections, and the secret ballot, as well as for real and effective democracy, on the other. This duality can have an echo in an apparently democratic political system whose real function is to facilitate the subordination of the subcontinent to new mechanisms of global domination. What we need to support is the idea that such fundamental decisions should be made democratically by the people.

22. Within this small opening, how do we evaluate the activities of the parties and the political movements between the fourth and fifth meetings of the Sao Paulo Forum? How do we evaluate the electoral results obtained so far? What is the perspective for the popular struggles in our subcontinent?

23. Within the climate of deepening social and political crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean, we see a re-animation of popular forces continually involved in a process that is intermingled with fractioning and tensions. In these debates, we are looking for alternatives, regroupments, and the recomposition of alliances.

24. We must take into account the effects of the crisis. The popular struggles against the phenomena of growing corruption on the continent are without precedent. They have interrupted the mandates of three presidents, presented charges against various ex-presidents and corrupt politicians, initiated judicial proceedings against senators, deputies, and other elected officials in numerous countries. One of the highest tendencies within the activity of social movements in Latin America and the Caribbean is that which begins with a restoration of struggles within this narrow framework. With each struggle the people gain a better understanding of the structural character of the crisis.

25. Within the political spectrum of the Sao Paulo Forum, we have seen the

following gains on the electoral plane. The triumph of the Revolutionary Democratic Party in the Panamanian presidential elections, as well as participation of other parties in governmental coalitions which have won [unreadable figure] deputies, 57 senators, and 10 governorships. At the same time, hundreds of mayoral victories have been attained with more than 29 million votes, constituting 24% of the votes cast in the present electoral cycle. It speaks to the class character of those excluded from the system that the organizations represented in the Forum have obtained a quarter of these recent votes. Without doubt, the majority of our parties and political movements have not had an equal experience. Consequently, our general electoral results have sparked a deep and constructive debate, as we have seen reflected in this meeting.

26. Furthermore, because of the discrimination suffered, the left has not yet developed articulate political and economic programs capable of attracting the majority of the population. Therefore our level of unity is precarious and insufficient for confronting the formidable waste of all types of resources that characterizes the dominant classes. Our parties and political movements have faced immense challenges in the struggle of our people to better understand the causes and the nature of the crisis that affects our continent, to create an indispensable consciousness for "change," and to educate about the urgent necessity of the economic and political integration of Latin America.

27. Finally, permit us to make a very brief reference to Cuba. The Cuban Revolution is a historical process in development, summarized by a permanent climate of blockade, hostility, and intense isolation, which some would now call "the project of the Helms-Burton Law." Throughout this process, the Revolution has been and remains in constant evolution and correction. These certain modifications correspond with the aspirations and needs of our people and with the conditions and possibilities at each moment. It is true that the changes occurring in the international scene place Cuba in a particularly difficult situation, which dictates the necessity of introducing certain modifications in social, economic, and political areas. However, the characteristics and rhythms of the present and future evolution of the Cuban political and economic project will be determined solely by the aspirations and potentialities of our own people, without external

impositions or conditions.

28. In conclusion, during the period between the fourth and fifth meetings of the Sao Paulo Forum, the situation in Latin America and the Caribbean was characterized by the deepening of the socio-political crisis, the advances of the United States in the process of re-articulating hemispheric relations, and the demonstrated capacity of the dominant political system to roll back the electoral gains of the left. However, the evident signs of the birth of the popular movement could not be hidden.

29. At this time, the challenges facing the popular forces of the continent are formidable. What do we do to broaden the democratic space inside our societies while so much external pressure acts to fortify antidemocratic tendencies? How do we avoid proposing to the masses what seems unattainable at the moment, while at the same time we avoid attempting less than the hopes of our peoples? It is an illusion to pretend that we already have the answers. Also, it would be absurd that a forum as broad and diverse as this would be able to elaborate acceptable recipes that would be applicable for everyone.

30. Without doubt, it is evident that the hemispheric pact signed at the Miami Summit was designed to stop the advance of popular sectors in Latin America and the Caribbean. For this reason, to be able to develop a continental strategy in response, it is indispensable to strengthen the Sao Paulo Forum, with the objective that we will be able to initiate a struggle against neo-liberalism and against the loss of sovereignty of our nations, because without sovereignty there can be no real democracy. ★



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Interviews with representatives of the Uruguayan Tupamaros, Brazilian PT and Cuban CP

The Latin American left and

Braulio Moro asks representatives of three Latin American parties about the importance of the Zapatista revolt in southern Mexico for the Latin American left as a whole. Julio Marenales is a member

of the leadership of the National Liberation Movement (MLN) — Tupamaros of Uruguay. Raul Pont is Vice-Prefect of Porto Alegre (Brazil) and a member of the Executive Committee of the Brazilian Workers'

● ***What have the Zapatistas brought to the Latin-American left since they appeared on 1 January 1995?***

Julio Marenales (MLN-Tupamaros,): First, this is a movement where the indigenous ethnic group is very important. This has not been so common in Latin America. All the ethnic groups which make up the various nations of Latin America have contributed to the revolutionary movements, but the only other movement where the indigenous peoples had the same weight in the movement as in the Zapatista movement was in the National Guatemalan Revolutionary Union (URNG). Generally, our movements have been movements of the whites.

Second, there is an aspect which we ourselves did envisage in an older document: the possibility of an armed insurrection which does not have as its goal the taking of power, but the defence of a certain model of democracy and legality. When you look at the programme of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), you don't see any socialist or revolutionary references. What they demand is simply the right to act within the system. A demand in pursuit of which they have had to take up arms! This is something new. In the previous situations, the armed struggle aimed at taking power. We ourselves did raise this new idea, but it is the Zapatistas who put it into practice.

Abel Prieto (Cuban CP): The development of a guerrilla movement in Chiapas state, and all the messages of Sub-commandant Marcos, with their new language, all this shows... that the application of neo-liberal strategies can cause new social explosions, including explosions which take an organised form.

Raul Pont (Brazilian Workers' Party): The Mexican 'miracle' was presented to Brazilians as a positive model, as something to follow. But the Zapatista rebellion is one of the clearest

expressions of the crisis which neo-liberalism has provoked in Latin America.

'Zapatism' exposes the reality in Latin America, with all its brutal inequalities. It confirms that the situation in Chile, Argentina and Bolivia is the same as in Brazil or Mexico. The orientation of [Argentinean President Carlos] Menem or of the Mexican government is to create a liveable society for 20-30% of the population, while marginalising all the rest.

The Zapatista rebellion proves that everything we were told about the Mexican 'miracle' was an invention of the mass media, reaffirming the 'one true way of thinking' which provides for no alternative to neo-liberalism, be it in Latin America or in the world.

● ***The EZLN does not describe itself as an avant-garde. Does this signify a real change in the tradition of the Latin American left? And how does this new conception affect the rest of the left?***

Julio Marenales (MLN-Tupamaros,): 'Avant-gardism' is not a question of self-affirmation. Whether you are in fact an avant-garde or not is something different from the question of whether you consider yourself to be an avant-garde or not. Whatever they say about themselves, the Zapatistas do find themselves in pole position in a certain process. No other political force in Mexico has provoked the same kind of social earthquake as the Zapatistas have. So, in a way, they are becoming, at least as long as the current conditions last, an avant-garde despite themselves. All this depends on a practical process, not on a theoretical point of view.

Abel Prieto (Cuban CP): It is too soon to make a judgement about this particular guerrilla movement, and the significance of the change from the so-called 'foco' strategy of guerrilla movements in previous periods. But it is certainly clear that this movement is an instrument of

pressure on those in power, but not one which makes constant reference to the classic theory of the taking of power by the guerrilla movement. But there are other programmatic approaches concerning which I find it difficult to make a judgement.

Raul Pont (Brazilian PT): This is a movement which has adopted none of the classic theses of the armed struggle in Latin America: neither the 'foco' strategy, nor the 'prolonged war' strategy. What I have read of them suggests a resistance movement which denounces the living conditions of the people. They understand the limits for a more general confrontation at the level of the political struggle in Mexico as a whole, and across Latin America. For me, the importance of the Zapatista movement is that they have broken a certain tendency among a large part of the left, which privileged a purely electoral perspective, and relegated the social movements and spontaneous struggles of the population to second place.

The big question is how to integrate various important experiences into a form adapted to the reality of each specific country. I think our own experience in the PT and the Popular Front (organised for the recent election campaign) also plays a role in creating unity in the face of neo-liberalism. In Uruguay, despite all the problems, the Frente Amplio is playing the role of unifying the popular democratic camp, with the goal of building an alternative project to neo-liberalism. This [synthesis and adaptation] is the most important tasks facing us, in each of the countries of Latin America. And the Zapatistas have several important elements of this process.

● ***The Latin American left has been very late in developing its solidarity with the Zapatista struggle and with the indigenous communities which are the social***

d the Zapatistas



base of the EZLN. Why?

Julio Marenales: Since the decline of the Latin American Solidarity Organisation (OLAS) in the 1960s, we have forgotten the importance of international relations and international solidarity. We are no longer concerned with what is happening in the other countries. As we have said in this Forum, our movements are becoming absorbed by national themes, and not paying enough attention to international problems.

We are also losing our ability to react. In Uruguay, for example, North American 'consultants' have arrived, without the large demonstrations this would have provoked in the old days. And it was an uphill struggle to get the Frente Amplio to participate in this Forum. I don't know about the other countries, but I think

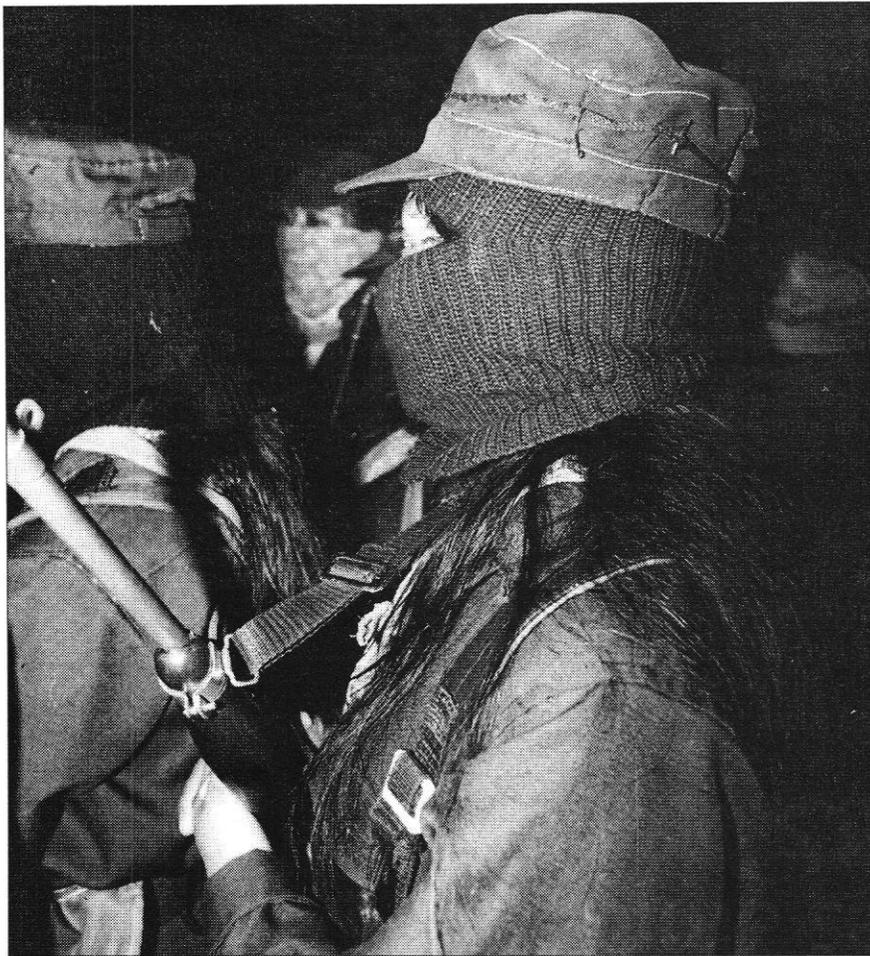
internationalism had declined a lot.

Abel Prieto: We have very good relations with the [ruling] Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in Mexico. We are a party in government, which tries to defend revolutionary ideas, and to maintain governmental relations with parties of differing political orientations, and with conceptions different from our own. We have to maintain this duality — not because we have double standards, but because we are working with other governments to try to break the isolation of Cuba. And we are engaged on a major diplomatic offensive in this regard.

Certainly, this Zapatista explosion has come at a time when the Latin American left has been developing a more moderate discourse ('este tipo de discurso de

izquierda light'). At the same time, we are in a period of recomposition following the ideological crisis caused by the collapse of Real Socialism. In other words, this is a phase when the left has not yet found a discourse to oppose to the reactionary post-modernist discourse. We are developing a moderate left, for the consumption of academics in North America, but we haven't analysed the international situation in sufficient depth.

Raul Pont: there have been public protests, and the diffusion of texts issued by the EZLN, but it is true that there should be more solidarity than there has been. The difficulties we have seen illustrate the lack of instruments which unify the struggles in Latin America. I think that this Forum is one attempt to



reinforce solidarity, but it hasn't done so with the urgency which the situation required. I do think that Latin American left parties could transform each action, each condemnation, each important political act into a propaganda initiative, with an echo in the other countries. At this Forum, we have heard extremely serious condemnations of the situation in Bolivia, Argentina and Brazil, and I think we need to create mechanisms for denouncing such things, for taking action, for solidarity, for correspondence, for the exchange of experience and information. We should also talk about our positive experience in municipal government, including the important experience with democratic control over popular resources.

● **What initiatives should the São Paulo Forum take in solidarity with the EZLN and the people of Mexico?**

Julio Marenales: First of all to decide that the constituent movements of the Forum should try to inform those around them about the conditions in Mexico, and the reality of the Zapatista movement. This is all still relatively little known. We should explain how the Mexican government exercises total hegemony in all area, including in the workers' movement. We would characterise this government-controlled labour movement as 'yellow', though there are of course valuable exceptions.

We should be thinking about some

continent-wide activities. Of course, the São Paulo Forum cannot do very much. But one could imagine a day of action, or some more specific initiative. Incidentally, we shouldn't be confining ourselves to one meeting every year. If something important happens, we should be able to plan solidarity action, a simultaneous strike across Latin America.

Inside the Forum, we have to struggle against the tendency which would reduce the EZLN to a virtually academic question. We should be looking for practical measures, however modest, which could become the beginning of a process, stimulating more important initiatives.

Abel Prieto: Obviously, we should mention the Mexican problem in the final declaration. We will adopt a final declaration in which we express our solidarity and try to sketch out a tentative solution. As far as the Cuban Communist Party is concerned, we have always defended the idea that this problem should be posed in the context of the question of political orientation which may provoke this type of violence and explosion. We have always encouraged peaceful discussion, respectful to the Zapatistas and to our partners.

Raul Pont: The left and the political groups in Mexico should ensure that what happens in Chiapas be known more widely, and that the Zapatista movement not be isolated. It should not be left up to the media.

The PT has reproduced documents of the EZLN and information about Mexico in our internal publications. Marcos' letters have found a large echo in our party. We have even managed to get information on the Zapatistas published in the national media in Brazil. In the PT, there is a very natural solidarity with the Zapatistas and with the struggles which are developing in Mexico. ★

[These interviews were carried out separately during the Fifth São Paulo Forum. The responses have been grouped for ease of reading].

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War resumes amid government's broken promises

On April 19th the Tamil Tigers unilaterally ended their fragile three-month cease-fire with the Sri Lankan government. The broken promises and missed opportunities of the centre-left Peoples Alliance coalition have had the predictable result. In fact,

neither side is interested in peace with dignity and freedom for the minority Tamil nation. *Bala Skanthakumar* argues that the way to stop the war is a mass movement for peace now, and against the government's anti-poor and neo-liberal policies.

The Peoples Alliance (PA) victory in August 1994 was greeted with relief and great expectation, especially after seventeen years of right-wing and authoritarian United National Party (UNP) government.¹

The fight against the "separatist menace", or in other words the war against the minority Tamil nation, was perhaps THE key election issue. The military option had been tried and had visibly failed. UNP-sponsored anti-Tamil riots in the (mainly Sinhala) south in 1983 actually increased support among Tamils for an armed struggle against the Sri Lankan state and for an independent homeland in the mainly Tamil north-east.

Waging war on a guerrilla force which knows its terrain and can melt into the population inflicted greater casualties on the government side. And the human rights abuses committed by the Sri Lankan army, its treatment of every Tamil as a terrorist and the racism of the Sinhala political establishment served only to embitter Tamils further.

Some 50,000 civilians have been killed. The northern Jaffna peninsula lies in ruins, its people living a pre-industrial existence. There is no electricity, and limited supplies of food and medicine. The only functioning hospital relies on an emergency power generator and the dedication of a handful of health workers. Hundreds of thousands of people are internally displaced: living in temples, churches and schools. Over two hundred thousand people have taken refuge in southern India, and hundreds of thousands more

are refugees and asylum seekers around the world.

President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga has dragged her feet over proposing a devolution package for the north-east ever since she was elected in October 1994. Several rounds of peace talks with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), but even the secret correspondence between Chandrika and LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran has proved to be fruitless.

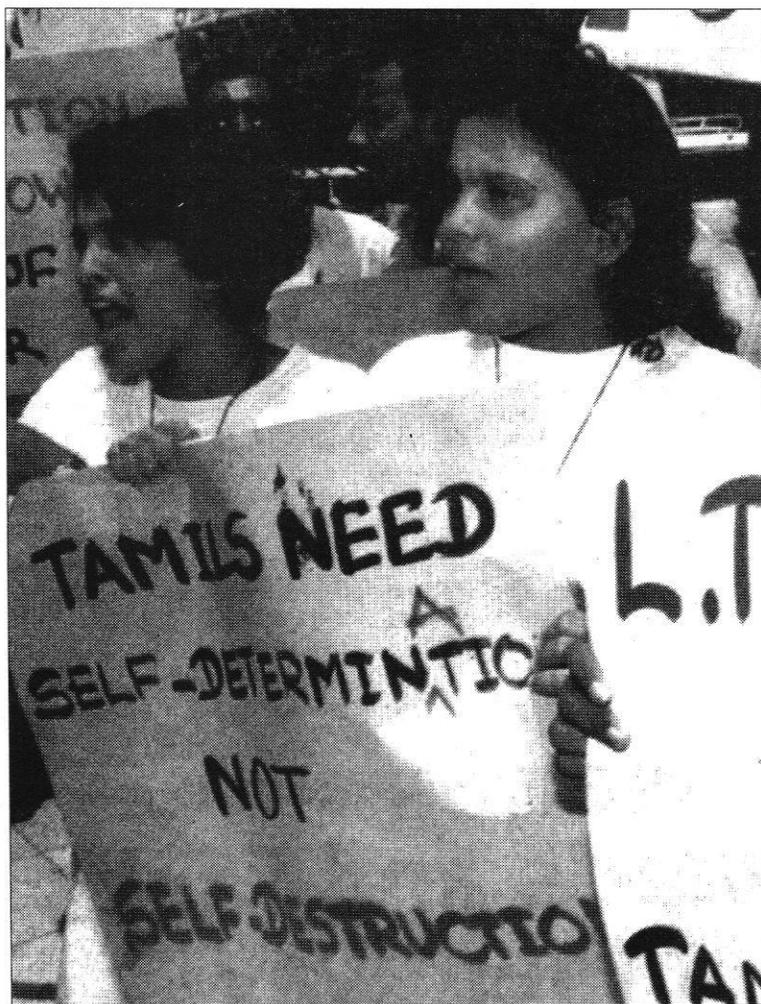
It was hardly surprising that the LTTE would eventually tire of talking peace and launch an audacious attack on the Sri Lankan

navy (merely two hours after formally ending the cease-fire). The LTTE has only one ideology — militarism. Its narrow and parochial brand of nationalism seeks only to replace the tyranny of the Sri Lankan state with that of its absolute leader over the Tamil people. In 1983 there were a dozen militant Tamil groups. Today, in the north-east of the island, there is only one. The LTTE has systematically assassinated the leaders and massacred the cadres of rival organisations. When it finished with them it killed leaders of non-militant Tamil parties and leftists, including comrade Annamalai of the Nava

Sama Samaja Party, Sri Lankan section of the Fourth International.²

The Tamil Tigers tolerate no dissent in the areas under their control. No other parties may operate. The press reflects only LTTE views, and there is neither free speech nor free assembly. Those who oppose (or even mildly criticise) them are imprisoned and tortured. There are currently 4,000 Tamils in the prisons of the Tamil Tigers. An independent state (Tamil Eelam) ruled by the LTTE would rival the Cambodian Pol Pot regime in its barbarity towards its own people.

The LTTE stems from, and draws its support from a real oppression and a widespread sense of injustice. In its methods and ideology it has become a mirror image of the very monster that spawned it — Sinhala nationalism. There is no social content in the Tigers' politics. The LTTE has no vision of a society



which can liberate the worker and toiler from the everyday violence of hunger and poverty. Nor would it uproot the oppression of women and lower castes within Tamil society.

Minorities in the North

How can the Tigers convince non-Tamil minorities that they will be safe in "Eelam" when they expelled 75,000 northern Muslims, who now live in refugee camps? On 26 May 1995 the Tigers murdered 42 Sinhala fisher-folk. And how to reassure minorities of their place on the territory controlled by the LTTE when democracy, human rights, and self-organisation are not even tolerated within the Tigers' own structures?

But attacks on non-Tamils in the ethnically mixed East will continue. They are central to the LTTE political-military strategy in two ways. First, these attacks serve the short-term purpose of keeping the army in the East, to protect villagers. This prevents the armed forces mounting a combined assault on LTTE forces in their northern stronghold. The second purpose of these attacks is more long term. Chasing out Sinhala and Moslem residents will change the demographic balance of the East, making it a clearly Tamil majority area.

Of course, simply pointing to the LTTE's long record of atrocities will not weaken Tamil support for the Tigers. Nor will the Sri Lankan government's promise to defeat the LTTE "within one year". We have heard this threat several times since 1979, and it has yet to materialise.

The LTTE fear only one thing: an end to the war and a durable, genuine solution to the national question. Because once they become irrelevant to the Tamil nation, the Tigers will lose their credibility and support. But as long as the Sri Lankan Air Force rains bombs on civilians, as long as people in the north starve though an economic blockade on food and necessities, and as long as Tamils in the mainly Sinhala areas live in daily fear of death and destruction of their property, the LTTE will continue to enjoy the support of the Tamil nation.

The mass media talks up war fever. Journalists report every rumour from the front as if it were fact. But the media is silent about the renewed reports of human rights abuses on the part of the Armed Forces. There are confirmed instances of the abduction and torture of Tamil youth in the ethnically mixed eastern areas. The "disappearance" of Tamils has resumed. There are reports that the army forces Tamil civilians to walk ahead of its patrols in heavily mined areas, so that soldiers will not lose their limbs. Whenever the LTTE attack an army base or police station, the security forces retaliate against any Tamil or

Muslim village or refugee camp in the area. Dozens have died in this indiscriminate violence against unarmed non-combatants. Thousands flee the area rather than risk becoming the target of either side.

Cordon and search operations in the south continue to take place. The aim is to "flush out" LTTE cadre. Thousands of young Tamil men and women are arrested, and questioned without legal advice or a translator. They are released, only to be picked up again a few days later. Sometimes the aim of this

President Chandrika... has said that her devolution could go beyond that of the Indian constitution. We are weary of such rhetoric. Former President J.R. said that his 'democratic socialism' would be 'a step beyond Marxism'. We are still suffering under his brand of 'socialism'. The continuous delay in coming out with concrete proposals has given ample ammunition to LTTE extremism... [The President] rejoices that "we moved fast to fulfil our pledges". What pledges, one may wonder. Certainly the known and secret pledges to foreign capital and their agents are fulfilled beyond limits. Yet the workig masses and progressive forces are living in shock, wondering what happened to the promises of the leaders they supported in three consecutive elections in 1994.

V. Karunaratne, General Secretary, Nava Sama Samaja Party, 24 May 1995

harassment is to persuade the parents to bribe the police to release their sons and daughters. Even long-time Tamil residents in the south fear travelling. Most live in a self-imposed house arrest: returning directly from work, and never going out when it can be avoided.

Sinhala chauvinism

The outbreak of war in April has given a new lease of life to Sinhala chauvinist forces. One newspaper even carried "Kill Tamils" as a banner headline. Posters everywhere carry emotive slogans about the suffering of soldiers at the front, or calls like "Save Our Country — Save Our Race" and "Annihilate the Tigers". But there are of course no identified LTTE members in the south. So such posters are in fact a virtual invitation to attack local Tamil civilians instead.

Media space in the south is dominated by hard-line anti-Tamil pressure groups, mainstream political parties and Sinhala fundamentalists and nationalists. The southern peace movement is the victim of a media black-out.

The current government faces more difficulty with the military hierarchy than with the UNP opposition. Military leaders have amassed fortunes through kickbacks on arms contracts and commissions on the transport of goods through military

checkpoints. They would not like to see this situation change.

As for the United National Party, they give relative support to a "popular" government which is realising the 'dirty work' the UNP began, but could not realise thanks to popular opposition. This is not just a matter of war policy, but also the implementation of anti-poor neo-liberal economic policies.

Protests have broken out in the tea estates over the privatisation of the management of the plantations. The cost of living spirals upwards, leaving staple foods too expensive for the very poor. The new outbreak of hostilities has been an excuse to increase the defence levy on many goods. Meanwhile, this allegedly left of centre government faithfully implements International Monetary Fund and World Bank diktats, so as to continue receiving aid loans from the Paris Club of western donor countries.

Stop the war!

While the current government cannot solve the national question, it can stop the war against the Tamil people. But breaking the government from its present course needs a mass movement based on the real anti-war sentiment among Sinhala people. This movement must demand an immediate lifting of the economic embargo on the north, and respect for human rights. It must also demand that the government stop treating the war as a private dispute with the LTTE, but recognise the interest of the Tamil people as a whole.

Secret negotiations should be replaced by a public debate on the future relationship between the two nations. The starting point is the Four Point proposal recently accepted by all Tamil parties except the LTTE. While this proposal falls short of accepting the right to secession, it is a starting point for negotiations on peace with dignity.³ The government must spell out its proposals for a political package answering the demands of the Tamils, or step aside and let others do so. The Nava Sama Samaja Party fully supports all efforts to forge such a mass movement, which could deliver not only peace, but also the possibility of an alternative workers' government. ★

Bala Skanthakumar is Secretary of the London-based Committee for Democracy and Justice in Sri Lanka and a regular contributor to the *Socialist Outlook* newspaper.

Notes

1. *International Viewpoint* #264, March 1995 p.16
2. See *The Broken Palmyra* by R. Hoole et al. (1990)
3. See the author's "New directions for Tamil Struggle" in *Tamil Times*, London, July 1993. The Four Point Proposal adopted by all the Tamil parties except the LTTE comprises
 - i. The unit of devolution shall be a newly created permanent province in the North and the East
 - ii. Devolution of power must ensure meaningful autonomy to this unit
 - iii. The cultural identity and security of the Muslim community within this unit will be the subject of institutional protection
 - iv. Sinhalese in the north-east will have the same rights as minorities in other parts of the island.

Bosnia at the crossroads

by Catherine Samary

IT IS TOO SOON to predict the final outcome of two recent events that could change the course of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina; the taking hostage of UNPROFOR observers and soldiers by Radovan Karadzic's Bosnian Serb forces, on the one hand, and the counteroffensive by the Bosnian army around Sarajevo on the other. But the humiliation suffered in the hostage taking episode has in no way lessened the common determination of the great Western powers, whatever their partially differing objectives; to avoid entering the war and to remain within the framework of the "peace plan" proposed by the "contact group" (United States, Germany, France, Great Britain and Russia). This plan attempts to preserve the frontiers of Bosnia-Herzegovina (thus not recognising the states within states, the Serbian republic of Karadzic and the Croat Herceg-Bosna) but at the same time proposes a territorial carve-up on an ethnic basis; initially into three entities, currently into two (51% for the Bosnian Croatian-Muslim federation, 49% for the part controlled by Karadzic).

Radovan Karadzic for his part is pursuing a constant objective; to obtain international recognition of the "Serb republic" of Bosnia in the name of the right of self-determination of the Serb people, as a stage towards the unification of all the Serb states. The union already proclaimed with the leaders of the Krajinas of Croatia, dominated by Serb secessionists, seeks to press home this point of view as an "irrevocable" right imposed on the ground through ethnic cleansing.

At the political and military levels Milosevic has a real interest in consolidating his power at the head of the Serbo-Montenegrin federation through the lifting of sanctions and international recognition. The war for a greater Serbia, which is being pursued on a 1000 km front, is very costly and increasingly

unpopular in Serbia itself. The rupture between Milosevic and his extreme radical right (with Vojislav Sesel in Serbia, then with Karadzic in Bosnia) has been a reality since a year now. But Karadzic is not a slave of Milosevic and the project of a greater Serbia has a real social base among the Serbs of the diaspora who — rightly or wrongly — regard themselves as threatened outside a Serb state. To build that state is moreover and above all the

the "Serb" republic of Bosnia. This would without doubt be "compensated" for by a recognition by Milosevic of the frontiers of Bosnia-Herzegovina, accepted by Karadzic because associated with the right of B-H to confederate itself with Croatia and Serbia. The dynamic of such a scenario depends obviously on the logic of the existing forces. It remains more than ever explosive and, in the absence of a political-military defeat of Karadzic,



raison d'être of the warlords like Karadzic. This latter will not give it up easily. Milosevic has not been able to sweep away these leaders in favour of others closer to him. Indeed the opposite has happened recently in Krajina, where "his" candidate was swept aside by the radicals.

In this context, all things being equal (that is, if the relation of forces on the ground does not deteriorate for Karadzic at the end of the Bosnian offensive) the paradoxical outcome of the hostage taking episode could be the reinforcement of Karadzic's international position. It is, then, towards a shaky and unstable compromise that we are proceeding. We do not know the tenor of the negotiations taking place in the wings, but one can imagine that Karadzic has agreed to "return" the hostages (a process which now appears completed) in return for a form of recognition of the authorities of

instead of a blow to the process of disintegration and nationalist polarisation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (and Yugoslavia as a whole), one will have only a stage towards a regroupment of a greater Serbia, with its chain of consequences in Croatia, Kosovo and Macedonia.

The objective of the recent offensive of the Bosnian army is to at least weaken, if not break, the logic of unification of the territories controlled by the Serbian nationalists. The Bosnian army has become more professional and settled in the course of the war. It is much more numerous than the Serb troops (whose superiority is in heavy arms). But there is neither defeat nor radical victory — as witnessed among other things by the continuing struggles in Bihac. It is undoubtedly as a consequence of these risks that Izetbegovic — after the first advances of the Bosnian army attempting to control the strategic routes linking



Sarajevo and Pale (the fiefdom of Karadzic) — has proposed to suspend all the fighting if Karadzic signs the peace plan.

For, although not satisfied by the 51% attributed to it, the Muslim-Croat federation has chosen to sign this plan, preserving at least formally the Bosnian state. The political desire to make Karadzic appear responsible for a non-signature has also undoubtedly limited the current offensive. But the essential questions are political. The Bosnian-Croat alliance is fragile because the common Serb enemy is at the same time, since the beginning of the war, an ally of the Croat nationalists against the Moslems, and because even in the secular context desired by a part of the Muslim SDA and the army, the federation remains dominated by the nationalist parties who all attempt to consolidate their exclusive territorial holdings and ideological grip. The some 150,000 Serbs of the federation remain in a precarious position in the absence of an equal status to that of the other peoples. Such is in fact the principle weakness of the Croat-Moslem federation in the struggle against the politics of Greater Serbia. But the federation remains the privileged framework of the resistance to the nationalist logic in defence of a multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina — which implies also that the identity of the components of the ethnic mixture is recognised. The regroupment of “Serbian Civic Councils” favourable to the maintenance of Bosnia-Herzegovina in several towns of the federation remains the proof that Karadzic does not incarnate the self-determination of the Bosnian Serbs — and that the federation is not (yet) an alternative guaranteeing the possibility of a multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina.

But is a multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina to be defended, even when a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Yugoslavia has broken up, and after the war has sown its sufferings and its hatreds ?

It must be defended. But for the right reasons. Several bad reasons are widely understood — such as the supposed need to defend a recognised state. But this is after all a juridical argument. And Yugoslavia was just such an

internationally recognised state.

A second bad reason is the supposed need to defend a recognised state under external attack. It is true that the initial outbreak of armed conflict was planned in Belgrade, in connivance with Zagreb. But the project of carving up the territory was relayed by local, Bosnian parties proclaiming mutually exclusive and intolerant nationalist programmes. To speak of a war of aggression (often reduced to “Serbian aggression”) is also to deny any social base to the clashing nationalisms in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is a way not to ask the question of what problems must be resolved in order to live anew in a community of several peoples.

Some say that this plurality of peoples is an invention, and that only one Bosnian people exists, as the result of the secular mixing of peoples. This would mean that

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the Bosnian ‘people’ is subjectively more solid than the ‘Yugoslav people’ was. But this is to make an abstraction from history. First of all to abstract from the history of secular differentiation, where religion combined with socio-cultural dimensions to forge distinct communities, the subsequent history of the construction of nation-states, starting from the break-up of the empires in the 19th century accompanied by a fatal polarisation of the Serbian and Croat Bosnian communities towards the neighbouring states, from whence the affirmation of the impossibility of a common Bosnian identity, which sought to favour Austria-Hungary against Serbian and Croat nationalisms, when the province passed under Austrian domination after 1878. Finally, there is current history, where the Bosnian state as common framework for the defence of the interests of all was rendered profoundly fragile by the coming to power of nationalist parties and a president with Islamic aspirations.

On the contrary, it is true that the secular history is also that of a long coexistence and tolerance. But above all, urbanisation and industrialisation carried out under Titoism during the recent decades have allowed the enlargement of horizons, the weakening of the weight of religion, the mixing of families. This real mixing of

peoples has evolved and been rendered more fragile by the fragmentation of Yugoslavia — with, at the ideological level, a dominant polarisation by the various nationalisms which contrasts with the attractive force of the partisans and their multi-ethnic anti-fascist struggle in WW2. This mixed Bosnia is also less real in the countryside, which is a juxtaposition of communities — from whence the dimension of the siege of the towns by the countryside in this conflict.

Yet even in the countryside there was no inevitable outcome of hate and fratricidal struggle. The role of the militias provoked the violence, the mendacious propaganda playing on the memory of past traumas are realities which have trapped the populations. Their manipulations have been facilitated by the absence of a progressive pole advocating a state of all the peoples at the Yugoslav and Balkan levels, as was done by the Titoist leaders — while distributing the land to the peasants. Today, the dismantling of social property to the profit of each state is accompanied by a real (and well-founded) fear of losing one’s job and land if one is not inside the ‘right frontiers’. It is necessary to reverse this process. That is why (and how) it is necessary to fight for a multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina. This means responding to all its fears so as to isolate and defeat the nationalist chieftains — whether they are in Bosnia-Herzegovina or the neighbouring states. That is why it is necessary to reverse the fatalistic argument which tends to justify ethnic cleansing (‘Yugoslavia broke up, so what else can we expect for Bosnia ?’).

What is necessary is a new union of peoples of the Yugoslav and Balkan region. It is the cost of the war which allows this idea to progress.

But there is no model, still less any simple slogan with which to defend these objectives — neither the Jacobean, unitary ‘model’ of integration, nor the construction of states based on exclusive ethnicity. One of the keys to democracy is the distinction of citizenship (universal, independent of origin and differences) and of collective rights (of distinct peoples, but transcending the exclusive territorial approach). But this is secondary to the essential element — the socio-economic development that allows people to live together without fear of the “foreigner” who steals your job and your social advantages. It is necessary to build this alternative logic on an European scale, not just in the Balkans.

20 June 1995

Working class and labour movement (Part 2)

This is the second section of David Mandel's survey of the situation of Russian workers and the labour movement in the fourth year of "shock therapy", the state-driven forced march to capitalism. In this section

the author focuses on unemployment, income and living standards. The survey is reprinted with the kind permission of the British magazine *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, for which the piece was written



As desperate as the economic situation has become for most enterprises, and despite a presidential decree of the summer of 1994 that was heralded as opening the way for bankruptcies, relatively few so far have occurred, and, according to the *Financial Times*, only one in a large enterprise. This was the Samara Aviacor aircraft plant, which subsequently underwent restructuring under a new court-appointed management, which cut employment by two thirds. But in other cases where large plants have defaulted on debts, the courts have at most allowed the seizure of the enterprise's "social assets" (clubs, rest homes, etc.) by the creditors.

The number of jobs in industry shrunk on the average by eight per cent between mid 1993 and mid 1994, according to the above-mentioned ILO survey. In some sectors, particularly the vast Russian defence industry, the losses over the past four years have been much heavier. The following are some illustrative figures: at the Kirov Factory in St Petersburg, which specialized in tanks and tractors, employment fell from an original 40,000 to 15,000 by the summer of 1994; at the ZIM defence plant in Samara - from 33,000 to 11,000 by the end of 1994, with 1000 more on involuntary leave; at Moscow's ZIL diesel truck plant - from 116,000 to 70,000 by the summer of 1994; at St. Petersburg's Arsenal aerospace plant - a 40% drop; at Samara's Aviacor aircraft plant - from 25,000 to 9,000. But even the coal industry, with its political clout and government subsidies, lost 80,000 workers in 1994, close to 10 per

cent of its work force.

"Voluntary" attrition has played a major role in the elimination of jobs. Workers leave because of the drastic fall in real wages and the poor prospects for their plant. Sometimes management offers severance packages to persuade workers to leave, thus avoiding having to go through the union and a possible appeals process. But permanent layoffs have also been occurring, particularly from 1994, including among pre-retirement-age work force. These have affected women disproportionately, who constitute some 80 per cent of the officially unemployed. The other major category is youth, about 40 per cent of the officially unemployed. Unless there is an upsurge in the labour movement, permanent layoffs can be expected to become much more frequent as privatization and the continued depression modify management behaviour.

Assets directly needed for production have not touched. (Of course, they are also less attractive to banks, from the short-term point of view that current dominate economic activity.)

Bankruptcy on a large scale poses a major political problem for the Russian government because of the typically huge size of Russian enterprises, often the town's main employer and supporter of its infrastructure (public transport, housing, heating, cultural and health facilities, etc.) This helps to explain, for example, why the Russian government, for now at least, has been cool to the World Bank plan to "restructure" the coal industry through massive closures that would cut over half the work force.

However, one should not rule this out for the future. The head of the Federal Employment Service predicted a sharp rise in unemployed in 1995. The government is held back only by pragmatic political

considerations: how far can it go before an effective opposition finally arises? But some small provincial towns have already lost their main industrial employers.

The sectors that are now actually hiring are trade, finance, and other services used principally by the new bourgeoisie, as well as construction in some areas, this too largely serving the private and business needs of that class. Among the rapidly expanding services is private security. Not surprisingly, Moscow, the main business centre and the entry point for international firms, has the lowest unemployment rate of all Russian towns and regions.

A trend that is beginning to manifest itself is the shift toward "flexible" employment through short-term, individual contracts. For example, auto plants, whose markets have been relatively stable, now use such contracts to fill vacancies on the assembly line with students and foreign workers. They are also being used in construction. In other industries, management is testing the ground on white-collar personnel. A strike over this issue in March 1995 at the Bolshoi Ballet halted performances there for the first time in almost two centuries.

Thus, for most workers, the de facto job security and the full employment of the Soviet era have become only fond memories. Whereas the old Soviet constitution included the right to a job, the one written by the Yeltsin after he crushed the parliament in October 1993 declares only that labour is "free". The threat of losing one's job, something that three years ago few workers took seriously, is now a palpable reality. The appearance of a reserve army of labour has deprived workers of their former power to "vote with their feet". This has strengthened management and dampened labour militancy. Even in Moscow, where unemployment is relatively low, health authorities report that sick workers avoid going for treatment out of fear of losing their jobs.

Female employment has suffered disproportionately from "shock therapy". Discrimination against women in hiring and layoffs is sharply on the rise. This has the government's sanction: the Minister of Labour has argued publicly that it is natural for companies to prefer men to women, the former being more reliable, as they are not distracted by family responsibilities and by having babies. The increased economic pressure on women has made them particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment on the job, which is very widespread. Job advertisements, especially in the growing private service sector, openly specify "long-legged

blonds," "friendly girls", "good attitudes".

2. Income and Living standards

a. The Wage System

Despite price liberalization and the official free-market ideology, the state continues to play a central role in regulating the price of labour in the private sector through taxation: as noted earlier, any part of the enterprise consumption fund (wage bill) in excess of six times (before January 1994 - four times) the state minimum wage multiplied by the number of employees is heavily taxed as profit. Some enterprises try to get around this, for example, through life insurance schemes that allow untaxed payments to policy holders, but overall this policy has been achieving its goal of keeping wages low, while other prices reach world levels. The wages of the twenty million public service workers are directly controlled by the state.

When the minimum wage was introduced by the present regime, it was presented as a social guarantee: the bottom rung of the wage scale for public service workers and the basis for calculation of various social allocations for the entire population as well as for judicial fines, and the like. However, in February 1995, the Minister of Labour acknowledged that the minimum wage was less than a tenth of the official subsistence minimum required by a single person. In April it could buy 1 kilogramme of sausage or 400 grammes of cheese. The government has systematically flouted the law requiring quarterly revision of the minimum wage - in 1993 it was raised twice and in 1994 only once, and remained significantly below less than what the law required. In February 1995, the government vetoed a parliamentary bill that would have doubled the minimum to 54,000 rubles, a little under one fourth of the minimum subsistence wage. It was considered inflationary and would have cut into government tax revenues from enterprises.

Another form of wage restriction is the government's regular, and illegal, practice of delaying payment of wages to public service workers. A similar effect is achieved by delaying payment of subsidies to state-owned enterprises and payment to enterprises for goods sold to the state. These delays can reach up to five months, and when they are finally made there is no compensation for inflation. Inflation in the first half of 1995 was still above ten per cent monthly, and since the start of "shock

therapy", consumer prices have risen by 778 times.

On March 10, 1994 Yeltsin issued a decree attaching legal responsibility for delayed wages but, for obvious reasons, the law provided no clear enforcement mechanism. The government's real policy - which comes down to robbing the work force - is to pay its debts selectively to groups of workers whose protest potential presents the greatest political or economic threat. In passing, it should be noted that official wage figures assume that wages are paid on time.

Under the old system, sectorial wage scales were centrally fixed. Enterprise management did have a certain leeway through the bonus system and also through the often arbitrary assignment to workers of higher-than-merited skill categories. Nevertheless, the enterprise's wage bill, as well as the size of the work force, were fixed by the plan which had the force of law (though plans could be, and quite often were, renegotiated).

By contrast, the new wage system is highly decentralized, based upon collective agreements concluded individually by enterprises. At the base of this system is supposed to be the national General Agreement between the national union federations, state and national employers' associations, which is to set the minimum framework for all other agreements, on the sectorial and then enterprise levels. This is the official policy of "social partnership." However, in 1994, the national agreement was signed only after the sectorial or tariff agreements, so it could hardly play its assigned role. Moreover, the national as well as branch agreements in practice are not legally binding on employers, since the law does not require membership in employers' associations capable of imposing discipline in their ranks. The role of the sectorial agreement in the coal industry is an exception, since this is still a mainly state owned and subsidized sector. But the miners have had constantly threaten strikes and repeatedly to strike to force the government to live up to the agreement.

Only the wages of public service workers are indexed by law, though, as noted, the government flouts the law. This renders meaningless branch agreements that set the minimum branch wage as a multiple of the state's minimum wage. Generally, regular indexation is enjoyed only only by the relatively more prosperous enterprises (e.g. VAZ, whose collective agreement provides for monthly indexation according to the price of a consumer basket), by politically relatively powerful groups of workers (e.g. the

coalminers, whose tariff agreement calls for quarterly indexation) or, finally, by workers in monopoly sectors, like public transport.

The two basic determinants of relative wages are the market situation of the sector and of the individual enterprise and the political clout of the workers. The best paid industrial workers are in sectors with access to foreign markets and/or that are structured along monopolistic line. At the end of 1994, the highest industrial wages were paid in the fuel sector, especially in gas (six times the average) and oil (2.2 times). Wages in the coal sector, on the other hand, once among the highest in economy, have fallen significantly relative to the others, though they remain double the industrial average, largely thanks to the exceptional militancy of the miners. Wages in metallurgy are above-average, but significantly more so in the non-ferrous sector, which has a strong export market. As a rule, the closer to extraction, the higher the wages.

Wages are also above average (1.4 times) in the transport sector, a reflection of its monopoly structure. In construction, which now serves mainly the business and private needs of the new bourgeoisie, wages are 1.3 times the industrial average.

Wages in most processing industries, especially light industry and textiles, metalworking and machine-construction (much of which was part of the defence complex), are well under the industrial average (half for light industry and 0.8 for metalworking and machine-construction), a consequence of the sharp drop in demand and the rise in costs of energy and raw materials. The passenger car and small truck industry is one of the few exceptions, thanks to the relatively stable demand of the *nouveaux riches* and to state protectionist measures. In Moscow alone, there was an increase of 350,000 cars in 1994. In the midst of an unprecedented peacetime economic crisis, Moscow over the past years has become the scene of immense traffic jams.

The average industrial wage in December 1994 was slightly above the overall average for the economy (1.07%). In the service sector, traditionally at the bottom end of the wage scale, public sector wages (in health, education, science, culture) are still among the lowest in the economy, from one half the national average in culture and art, to two thirds in health, to three quarters in science. On the other hand, the banking and financial sectors, which were once also at the bottom of the wage scale, are now at the top, with wages 3.6 times the national average. It is into this sector that the



accumulated national wealth, as well as that wealth that is still being produced, is being transferred. There have been cases of doctors leaving their jobs in Moscow public health clinic to clean banks. "At least I'll earn something with which to support my family, explained one former doctor."

Thus, the combined effects of the market "reform", the economic crisis and weak worker solidarity have put an end to the relatively egalitarian wage system of the Soviet era: the ideology calls for wages to be linked to the enterprise's market situation. In April 1995, the average wage in the gas industry, the highest industrial wage, was ten times higher than the average wage in agriculture and four times the average wage for the economy. The wage system has also lost its former intra-sector uniformity. For example, within the metallurgical and mining sector, in the summer of 1994, workers' wages varied all the way from 70,000 to 700,000 rubles a month.

Differentiation has also increased significantly within enterprises between managers and workers. Though managerial salaries have typically become "commercial secrets", selective data show the gap to be growing, reaching up to 20 times and more. And despite the market ideology, managers' salaries are weakly correlated to profitability.

Apart from wages, workers receive various payments from the enterprise, such as material aid in case of particular need, a food and travel allowance, in some cases a housing allowance. However, these on the average correspond to only 8% of the wage and are proportionately higher in the better paid sectors (e.g. 15% in the financial sector), so that they tend to

increase inequality.

Because of the growing sectorial differentiation, the wage gap between regions is also growing, with wages highest in the resource-rich Siberian regions, as well as in Moscow, and lowest in central Russia, where machine-construction and light industry predominate.

Another key dimension of wage differentiation is the growing gap between women's and men's wages. Because of vertical and horizontal segregation in the Soviet period, largely the result of unequal family burdens but also a consequence of direct discrimination, women, who are on the average better educated than men, earned about 70% of men's wages. With the increased economic pressure on women today and the official rejection of gender equality, women's wages have fallen to 40% of men's and continue to fall.

b. Real income

The immediate effect of price liberalization at the start of 1992 was to cut real wages by a 61.5 per cent. In the following months average real wages climbed back to about 50 per cent of their pre-shock level but have since continued to fall. In 1994, real income declined on the average by 13.6 per cent, with the average income of the active population declining from 1.69 to 1.46 times the very low minimum subsistence income calculated by the state for one adult person. In 1995 the situation has continued to deteriorate - in the first quarter, the average salary was one third lower than in the same period in 1994. The percentage of people earning less than the minimal subsistence wage increased

during that period from 25 to 30 per cent of the work force.

In January 1995, the wages of 90 per cent of public service workers, or 14 million people were below the minimum subsistence wage. That was two and half times more public service workers than at the start of 1994. Half of workers earning less than subsistence could not afford even the minimal consumption basket of 19 basic goods. The minimum pension is just over half the cost of that basket. UNICEF put half of the population of Russia below the poverty line; the government claims one third.

The extent of secondary, unreported, earnings is difficult to gauge, since people are obviously not eager to reveal them. Scattered evidence as well as logic indicate that the illegal labour market is quite large. This would help to explain how the unemployed and those with jobs receiving below the subsistence minimum survive. Nevertheless, cases of workers fainting from hunger have been reported in the press.

A large part of the population now has garden plots and, in smaller towns, people may keep animals. In many cases, elderly parents are forced to share their meager pensions with their unemployed children. In larger cities, petty commerce, rental of rooms and apartments, construction, handywork, and, not least, pilfering from the enterprise, often supplement wages. Few people have any savings to fall back upon - the inflation following price liberalization wiped out savings, which the government so far has refused to compensate. Total real household wealth declined 86 per cent as result of price liberalization.

In a study conducted between November 1993 and March 1994, only 13 per cent of respondents stated that the income from their primary occupation met their basic needs. Meanwhile, the very concept of "basic needs" itself has been transformed over the past three years. Whatever the real role of income in the informal or illegal sector, there is no doubt that most workers have undergone serious relative and absolute impoverishment and that the main mode of adaptation has been to reduce needs sharply.

c. The Declining Social Wage

It is estimated that for every ruble earned in wages in 1984, 69 kopeks were distributed in the form of free or subsidized goods and services from public consumption funds. Thus, the drastic cutback in the social wage has been a major factor affecting living standards. In the 1990, 35 per cent of the state budget

was earmarked for social needs, as opposed to only 14 per cent of the Russian government's budget for 1995. Already in 1994 87 per cent of these expenses had been passed down to local governments that simply do not have the money to pay for them. In 1994, the government, through a presidential decree, even attempted to reduce employers' social security payments from 5.4 to 3.4 per cent of the wage bill, but it retreated under union protest. This move would have wiped out in one blow much of the remaining social wage.

Much of the social wage in the last decades of the Soviet system had been administered not by the state but by the enterprise. The last two years have seen a growing tendency of enterprises and other employers under economic pressure to shed their "social spheres". The most important of these is housing, the largest part of which was traditionally constructed by large enterprises. New construction for workers has almost come to a standstill over the past two years. Ten million people are on lists for housing allocation, and thirteen per cent of these have been waiting ten years or more. The vast majority of young people have no hope of obtaining their own apartment, except through inheritance, since free market rental and purchase prices are well beyond their reach. At the same time, the once nominal rents paid by those who already have housing are gradually rising to cover the costs of maintenance, as enterprises can no longer pay the subsidies.

Enterprises are also attempting to transfer their daycare and health facilities to the municipalities. But the financial situation of the cities is no better. When the local government does take over these facilities, it cannot keep them in repair. Still other factory-owned facilities, like sanatoria and prophylactic healthcare facilities, are gradually being commercialized and opened to the general public, limiting subsidized access to them for enterprise employees, who are being charged increasingly higher fees. Facilities that cannot be transferred or commercialized, like sports arenas, are simply being destroyed through neglect.

Besides housing, daycare and health facilities, other enterprise-centred benefits that are gradually being reduced in real terms or even completely terminated are subsidies for food, transport, vacations, leisure and cultural activities, payments for burials, weddings, births, retirement bonuses. Of course, if these lost benefits were compensated by higher wages that enabled the workers to purchase the services, or if the state were taking over

their administration in full, then the changes could have the beneficial effect of reducing workers' material dependence upon the enterprise and its management. But this is not happening.

d. Health

A study by UNICEF covering the period 1899-1993 found abnormally high death rates for males that "parallel or surpass those normally observed in wartime conditions." This, according to the study is the "real cost of the collapse of communism." It would be more accurate to attribute responsibility to the government's "reform", about which there is nothing inevitable. In 1993 alone, male life expectancy declined by 3.6 years (to 59 years) and female by about two years (72). Among the main causes are: the breakdown of the underfunded public health system (in theory still free, but in practice increasingly based upon user payment), poverty, increased alcohol consumption (a major source of government revenue), the rise in crime, domestic violence and suicide, and the spread of infectious diseases. All these factors are attributable to the economic crisis and the related loss of economic and psychological security.

The economic crisis has led enterprises to cut spending on health and safety, at the same time as workers have become less demanding and observant of safety norms. A major factor contributing to the decline of health-and-safety standards enforcement was the government's decision in 1993 to taken over the technical inspectorate from the unions. The result is reduced state funding and an inspectorate more easily influenced by management. In coalmining, according to the head of the State Technical Inspectorate, the decline in technical levels has been "catastrophic". Occupational illness have increased 2.4 times in the past four years. This tendency for traumatism and professional illnesses to rise exists in all branches, despite the sharp decline in production. According to the president of the Metal, Foundry and Mining Workers' Union:

"The crisis situation in the economic and social spheres has greatly weakened attention to health-and-safety issues... Forty out of every thousand workers work in conditions that don't correspond to health-and-safety norms. The situation has worsened in relation to the supplying of workers with individual safety equipment and clothing. Enterprises have significantly cut back in spending for health and safety."

e. Declining popular access to

quality education and culture

The "reform" and the economic crisis have reduced popular access to secondary and higher education. Free and universal complete secondary education, ten years of schooling, was one of the key social reforms of the Khrushchev era. This has ended under a new "reform" that has put admission to the tenth year on a competitive basis, with the decision left to the school administration. University education is also no longer free, though a certain number of free admissions are set aside for exceptional students from poor families. But all but students with rich parents are forced to work to support themselves, since the real value of student stipends - miserly under the old regime - has become almost symbolic.

Even the strongly pro-"reform" *Financial Times* has lamented the decline in popular access to quality culture. It belatedly acknowledged that under the old regime, despite political controls, high quality cultural services and goods were accessible to the general population. The "free market" and curtailment of state subsidies have put an end to this. The little that remains, primarily through television and cheap publications, is often the worst of what the capitalist, especially American, world has to offer. Russian-made films have practically disappeared from cinemas, whose main fare has become action and sex films. Centres for popular culture and sports are being closed and rented to businesses, and those that maintain their former functions are being priced out of reach of many citizens.

The precipitous decline of Russian science, while not directly affecting workers, is an indication of the type of economic structure and jobs that will emerge if "shock therapy" runs its course. Between 1990 and 1993 alone, 1.2 million scientists, almost a third of the total, left science, mostly for the business sector or to emigrate. Spending on scientific research and development as a percentage of GNP is a quarter of what it was in 1985, while the GNP itself is about half of what it was in 1985.

f. An increasingly unequal society

While differentiation among workers grows apace, inequality has increased much more rapidly between the mass of the wage-earning population and the "new Russians" or bourgeoisie. The latter are often indistinguishable from the criminal elements inside and outside the state apparatus. Even Yeltsin's Minister of



Labour has been moved to describe this level of inequality as "economically and socially unjustified."

In the first three years of "shock therapy", according to official statistics, the income gap between the best-off ten per cent and the poorest ten per cent grew from 4.5 to 16 times. In 1994, the earnings of the first group were equal to the earnings the entire lower two thirds of the population. And according to the Ministry of Labour, the gap in reality is much greater. The growing differentiation has occurred on the background of a major decline in total national income during the same years. The effect of the relatively more stable distribution of non-monetary benefits, such as housing subsidies, medicine subsidies, food from plots, has only slightly moderated the gap.

According to the government, the incomes of the top 20 per cent grew by over 30 per cent in 1994, while those of the bottom 20 grew by only five per cent. "Behind the overall increase in incomes hides the rapid growth of the well-being of some and the impoverishment of others." Yet this is hailed by a World Bank publication as bringing Russia into line with market standards, as if this were in itself proof that the change is for the better.

As noted, regional differentiation is also growing, with the highest average incomes in Moscow at 2.9-3.4 times the subsistence minimum, followed by the resource-rich areas east of the Urals, especially the Tyumen' region, at 2.4-2.9. At the other end of the scale are the central and southern European regions, the Urals (all dominated by machine-construction), Southern Siberia and the Far East, where average wages are only 0.7-1.2 times the minimum subsistence income. However, the regions with the highest average wages are also those with the greatest wage inequality, so that they too have a large proportion of poor population.

It is impossible precisely to assess the changes in the distribution of wealth over the past few years, since almost everything but consumption goods were national property under the Soviet system, though managed by the state-party bureaucracy in its own interests, and there is no reliable data on the value or real ownership of the vast part of this economy that has been officially privatized. This will probably not become clear until the transitional periods ends and some level of economic and political stability is reached.

What is already clear, however, is that despite the distribution of vouchers to the population for the purchase of stocks, as well as the widespread opting by work collectives for the second form of privatization, which gives them (including management) up to 51% of the enterprise's shares, privatization in practice has been one of the biggest, if not the biggest, swindles in human history. Without any pretense of democratic consultation, it was forced upon a population that consistently opposed privatization of large enterprises. Moreover, even by the state's own legal norms, the process has been rampant with corruption and widespread violence.

Despite the broad stock ownership, workers, and the population as a whole, today have less say in running their enterprises and the economy than was the case before privatization. Moreover, because of the widespread poverty, the original dispersion of shares is proving short-lived, as domestic and foreign capitalists buy up those that represent any value for a song. ★

Sixth Anniversary of Tiananmin Square massacre

Democratic struggles resurge

by Zhang Kai

Before the sixth anniversary of the 4 June 1989, the Beijing regime started rounding up activists of the democracy movement. It was reported that a few dozen activists had been taken away from their home or had disappeared.

All these years, the regime has resorted to repression of dissidents. In 1994, several hundred persons were reportedly detained or jailed. The most famous dissident Wei Jingsheng had suddenly disappeared after his short release from prison. Wei Jingsheng's assistant Tong Ge had also been arrested for a whole year and nothing had been heard of him. In the past years, the period from March to June had been alert periods for the regime when it put dissidents in prison or under house arrest. This year, it was rumoured that the period would extend to August or September, indicating a growing tension in the political scene in China with the veteran Chen Yun already dead and Deng Xiaoping about to die, and with the power struggle in the top leadership growing more acute.

Petition by intellectuals

This year, a wave of petition letters from intellectuals to the Party and government leadership has taken place. At the end of February, twelve scholars and dissidents including Bao Zunxin and literary critic Wang Ruoshui wrote two letters to the National People's Congress, one "Recommendations Against Corruption", and the other "To Abolish Arbitrary Detention and to Safeguard Personal Freedoms". Former student leader Wang Dan and 25 others including Lin Mu wrote to the National People's Congress "Recommendations on the Defence of Basic Human Rights and Social Justice". Dissident Liu Lianchun and 21 others wrote a petition "Recommendation on the Abolition of the Practice of Re-education through Labour". The NPC did not react to these petitions, and some of the petitioners were arrested before June Fourth this year. The arrests, however, did not inhibit the wave of petitions. Within two weeks, at least eight other petitions were launched. The leading one was a petition by 45 well known intellectuals, 15 of whom were



from the Science Academy. The title of the petition was "Greeting the United Nations Year of Lenience, Appealing for Lenience in Domestic Politics". It appealed for a re-evaluation of June Fourth and the release of prisoners connected to June Fourth.

Another petition was by 52 scholars and dissidents, appealing for "drawing on the lesson of blood, promoting the process of democracy and the rule of law". It asked every citizen in China, but in particular the party and government authorities that have made wrong decisions, to rethink the tragedy of June Fourth with repent, reason and responsibility.

Victims' families

It was also the first time in six years that 27 families of victims of June Fourth (the families included Professor Ding Zilin from Beijing University) jointly petitioned to the Standing Committee of the NPC saying that they "absolutely cannot accept that the government resorted to machine guns and tanks to harm so many people and still could hurriedly conclude on a world-stunning tragedy with the words 'quenching a rebellion'". They requested the NPC Standing Committee to form a special commission to investigate into the June Fourth Incident, to conduct independent and just investigation, to disclose the number and names of deceased, and to answer to each individual

family. They called on people of the whole country to be concerned for the destiny of the families of the June Fourth victims.

This wave of petitions is an indication of the revitalizing of people's struggles in China. The background to this is an intensification of power struggles at the top. With Chen Yun dead, Jiang Zemin has been placing his men from Shanghai in important positions in Beijing. Beijing's mayor Chen Xitong was removed from power on the accusation of corruption. Yuan Mu also had his directorship of State Council Research Office removed. (Chen Xitong and Yuan Mu were the two hardliners for the June Fourth crackdown, and had been supporters of Li Peng.) On the other hand, Li Peng has just published a bibliography of his own life, entitled "*Li Peng — Son of Yen River*", which was an attempt to eulogize his past.

The economic situation has also aggravated, which is another cause for further discords in the leadership. In 1994, prices of grain, cotton and fuel soared by 21.7% (official figures). The Beijing Steelworks, a key state-owned factory, was denounced for "serious flaws and deficits". Whether the growing regionalism in the south should be contained is another controversy. With the political and economic situation becoming more explosive, it is no surprise that the people's struggles are ascending. ★

"Arafat cannot deliver"

International Viewpoint's Salah Jaber talks to Tikva Honig-Parnass, editor of *News from Within*, published by the Alternative Information Center (AIC) in Jerusalem.

● ***International Viewpoint: how did you become an anti-Zionist militant ?***

Tikva: I was raised in Palestine by a very Zionist family, and I belong to the generation that fought the so-called 'war of independence', in 1948. Already then, I adhered to that artificial combination between Marxism and Zionism, and started identifying with the Mapam party. After the war, I studied in the Hebrew University and became the Secretary of Mapam in the Knesset [the Israeli parliament] in the 1950s. I felt relaxed, of course, with this combination of Marxism and Zionism. But gradually, the meaning of the Middle East conflict and the role of Israel in it became clearer to me: what opened my eyes most was a book written in the early 1960s by the forefathers of Matzpen¹, Moshe Machover and Akiva Orr, *Peace, Peace but no Peace*. It contained articles and documents revealing Israel's refusal to make peace. This, of course, was a kind of a shock to me. I felt close to Matzpen when it was formed, but I did not join. Actually, I came closer to the Communist Party and in 1956 I lived in London for almost a year and participated in the Communist Party activities there. But on my way back to Israel, the 20th Congress of the CP of the Soviet Union was another shock to me and then for years, I was just lost.

I passed my PhD and pursued my academic life while becoming more and more anti-Zionist, but i was only in the 1980s that I came across Matzpen in Jerusalem. That was when the war against Lebanon started, and I joined the protest movement, the Committee for Solidarity with Bir Zeit University in particular, in

which Matzpen was involved. I then joined Matzpen.

● ***So you were not aware, in the 1970s, of the existence of the RCL-Matzpen as a Trotskyist organisation ?***

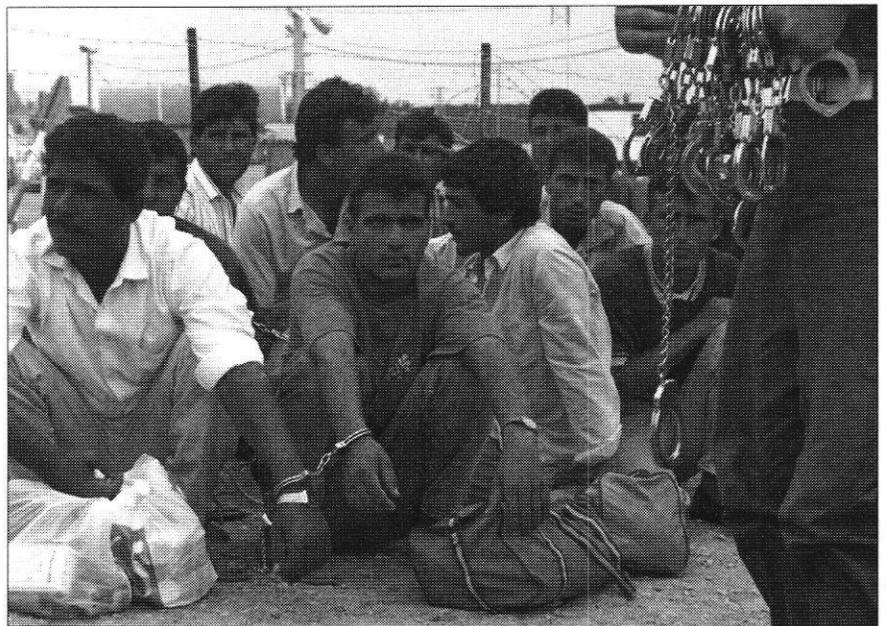
Not at all. I kept reading Marxist writings without knowing Trotskyism. I discovered it only through Matzpen in the early 1980s.

Liberating yourself from Zionism is a long, very difficult process, you know. Even when you are politically disconnected with Zionism, the emotional ties are still so strong. If you do not have the support of an organisation, and you are doing it by yourself, it is of course much more difficult. This emotional process needs support and solidarity from comrades and friends. In Israel, disconnecting yourself

from Zionism is disconnecting yourself from friends. You can no longer participate in the society.

● ***You broke with Zionism after deciding that Zionism was not willing to settle for peace. So why react so critically to the peace agreement' ?***

Matzpen's support of the PLO is based on the criteria that it is anti-imperialist, fighting against Zionism, and representing the entire Palestinian people. Our view was that as long as the PLO was an anti-imperialist force in the region, we support it, although it is nationalistic, although we are aware of its bureaucratisation process. It was not a support for nationalism as such, but a support for a nationalist struggle in so far as it is progressive.



For more information...

International Viewpoint published an article by Tikva Honig-Parnass on the 1993 Peace Accords ("*Bantustan in the making*"), in IV 252, Jan. 1994.

"Liberating yourself from Zionism is a long, very difficult process. Even when you are politically disconnected with Zionism, the emotional ties are still so strong. If you do not have the support of an organisation, it is much more difficult... In Israel, disconnecting yourself from Zionism is disconnecting yourself from friends. You can no longer participate in the society."



When I looked at the agreement, I saw that the PLO was to become a part of the 'new order', that nothing was mentioned about Palestinian rights. Even the word 'occupation' was not mentioned. Israel was not committed to withdrawing from the occupied territories, or to dismantle the settlements or give back Jerusalem which represents by itself 30% of the West Bank. Israel will not even withdraw from the Gaza strip². The refugee issue is far from being settled. So, I did not care about the symbols of independence: it is not a matter of flags or even coins. Not only are basic rights not being addressed, but the agreement is a disaster for the whole Palestinian national movement. It is the best solution for Zionism, a very big victory. — everybody knows this by now.

● **Supporters of the agreement would say that it was a compromise, including many gains for the Palestinian people, and that, precisely because of these gains, the Zionist government is delaying implementation.**

There are no substantial gains for the Palestinian people in the agreement. It was actually a setback for them, because its condition was putting an end to the Intifadah. Although the Intifadah was already on the decline, there were armed actions against the occupation and Israel was still afraid of the possibility of a renewed uprising. What's more, the Washington accords played into the hands of the Arab states. It was a kind of

compromise that they could accept. It gave them a good argument, or rather a pretext to start normalising relations with Israel. And finally, the agreement divided the Palestinian people and the PLO. Arafat negotiated the agreement, not all [Arafat's hegemonic faction within the PLO] Fatah leaders. Many Fatah and PLO leaders didn't agree with it.

People thought however that the appearances of direct Israeli military occupation would be removed much faster. Even the left wing Palestinians took it for granted that, after Washington, the army would withdraw and that very soon Arafat would be put in control of the West Bank.

There was a kind of euphoria among the Palestinian people inside, after Washington. The mistake was based upon an underestimation of the opposition, above all [the fundamentalist Islamic Resistance Movement] Hama. Arafat cannot abolish them. Israel exerts constant pressure upon him to disarm Hamas, but he cannot do it: not because it is strong — which Hamas certainly is — but because the population supports them morally. Arafat cannot afford to disarm Hamas while the occupation continues. He has no social legitimacy to do so. He relies on part of [his own organisation,] Fatah: 20,000 people from Fatah are paid by the Palestinian Authority, either as officials or as police forces (there are seven kinds of security services!).

On the other hand, there is no organisation which has a concrete alternative to offer, not even Hamas. So, if there are elections, Arafat will obtain his 51% of the votes. It doesn't mean that people support him. It means that things are at a standstill: the situation is full of contradictions, everything is open. The occupation continues and life is much worse than before.

● **How could life be worse?**

This is another thing which we did not realize fully: everything is still connected

to Israel, down to the smallest business. Economic life is totally tied. You need a permit for anything: for instance, you want to renew your identity card in Greater Jerusalem, you must show that you pay taxes... You want to visit your family in Gaza, or to go from the North to the South — this is one country! — you can't, you need a permit, the same for going to the hospital, to the school, etc. Just name it: every detail of life makes you dependent on Israeli bureaucracy.

And of course, there are no jobs. 120,000 Palestinians were working in Israel, now they are maybe only 30,000 left. Meanwhile, nothing is developed in Gaza or in the West Bank. Unemployment reaches 50% in Gaza!

Torture continues, arrests continue, the daily harassment continues. During the Intifadah, you could find support, you had the networks of the popular committees, the grassroot women movement, even trade unions, although weak and led by Fatah; you had some nucleus of social organisation providing moral and material support. Now all this is totally dispersed, atomised, you are alone. There are eight thousand prisoners, and no pressure to free them. Half a year ago, the streets were still full with mass demonstrations on their behalf, and they are now totally neglected. It is in this sense that things are worse now in the West Bank.

But even in Gaza, under the Palestinian Authority, things are worse: the Authority adopted all the repressive measures of the Israelis, they arrest without orders, they torture (already two or three died under torture), they shut down newspapers without even issuing decrees, orally! A lad went to the daily *Al-Nahar* and closed it. If it were not so sad, it would be farcical. Editors received threats from the Authority because they had described a demonstration organised by Hamas as involving several thousands, instead of claiming that there were only one thousand.



● **Is Hamas the main reason why Rabin is delaying implementation of the agreement?**

Rabin is only fulfilling a very symbolic part of the agreement. There was a date set for the Israeli army to withdraw from populated areas of the West Bank, and he did not keep his promise. Arafat now even agrees to an Israeli withdrawal from just some towns. There is no limit for Arafat: in this framework of the disaster, Rabin can play like he wants.

His only problem is that Arafat cannot deliver the goods and that there will be elections in a year's time. Hamas is no real danger for Israel; it only creates a feeling of personal insecurity that Israel can stand. But of course, the Israeli right wing are using it against Rabin and this he cannot afford. Thus Hamas is a spoke in the wheel of the agreement: Arafat cannot obey Israel in trying directly to abolish Hamas. For political reasons, he cannot destroy them, whatever he might have promised Rabin.

● **Why is Hamas so popular? Because of its religious ideology?**

Hamas is popular because there is no other opposition whatsoever! Many secular youngsters joined Hamas' armed struggle. Hamas represents Palestinian opposition to the occupation — not to the Washington agreement, but to the occupation. Both are now connected, since the Palestinian Authority does not challenge the continuity of the occupation, the opposition to Arafat appears as an opposition to the occupation.

● **How is Arafat considered by those in the occupied territories?**

It is difficult to tell. The polls show that he still holds some popularity. Of course, it depends on which sectors of the population we are talking about. For many, he is now a joke, but at the same time he is the frightening leader of a frightening regime. There is no longer admiration for him, otherwise he could have done much more to please the Israelis. His power base is part of the Fatah who live by him, all those salaried or hoping to get something from him, and of course the simple people who believe that nothing better is available. But even the most supportive of polls among the Palestinians show that Arafat won't get in direct elections more than 50%.



● **What about the Palestinian left? Why does Hamas seem to be the only opposition?**

The left did not realise how deep the wreck brought by the Washington agreement was. If one thinks that the agreement is not so bad, then we can discuss the kind of political strategy needed. If however it is considered as an attempt to quash the national movement, as they described it, then you have to start organising for confronting the new regime. They should have foreseen that the main problem will be confronting the Palestinian regime, after the removal of the main symbols of Israeli direct control.

● **But Hamas is not popular because it fights Arafat, but because it fights Israeli occupation.**

Of course. But when the agreement was signed, the left did not know to what extent direct Israeli occupation would continue. We also thought that the army would retreat, that there would be a certain autonomy and that the main struggle would be to push Arafat to go beyond the limits of the agreement. In a certain way, there is a continuity in the position of the left towards the PLO: all the time, for the sake of unity, they did not work really for an alternative to Arafat. Only now they are speaking about building a new PLO, but these are merely words, there is no alternative strategy.

The whole conception of a transitional program, the whole idea of starting from the current needs of the masses is alien to them. They lose time again and again. For instance, a year ago, the whole issue of Greater Jerusalem was put on the agenda;

[Arafat supporter] Faysal Hussein and others wanted to do something. So the left started quibbling about whether they should go together with Hussein or not, and thus missed the opportunity. Now the whole thing is lost, Hussein will not do it and no one will go for anything. They had also at one point the opportunity to take the lead of a renewed Intifadah on the land issue, but they were hardly present. They should have concentrated on that, a tremendous potential was involved there: for the land, the masses are ready to fight, ready to die.

What prevails among the left is disorientation, despair, a very deep crisis. There is also the problem of the bureaucratisation of the parties, the criticism from the young generation. More and more people leave the left parties, but remain emotionally very much attached to the left which used to represent the genuine national aspirations.

● **But the Palestinian left has denounced the Washington agreement in the same way as Hamas. So what makes Hamas more popular? Involvement in the continuing armed struggle against**





Israeli occupation ?

This is only one aspect. Hamas has developed military and grass-root organisations. Their bases inside the communities are strong, even stronger than their military units. Hamas is very strong on typical community issues: like schools, childcare, mosques, and economic assistance. Whereas, at the time of the Washington agreement, the Palestinian left had lost its infrastructure: the grass-root organisations of the Intifadah had been dispersed, only some NGOs remained. They did not strive to build a grass-root community and workers based movement, like in South Africa.

Take, for instance, the trade union movement. During the years of the Intifadah, Fatah did what they wanted, because the conception of a trade union was never one of an organisation dedicated to the defence of the workers. It was always conceived as a branch of the PLO, of the nationalist struggle.

Take also the women's organisations: they are subservient to the political organisations. They are the women of the Popular Front, of the Democratic Front, of Fatah, but not autonomous women's organisations. Sure, they had roots in the communities and they participated in the popular committees of the Intifadah. They were even leading the popular committees, because the men were in prison. But they never developed any kind of activity around specific women's issues. So, when the Intifadah went down, these women's organisations could not fulfil any needs of women. You can see presently independent women's centers or NGOs going around, while those subservient to the political organisations are shrinking.

● Would it be possible for the left to become the major pole of the opposition instead of Hamas ?

Not now. Just after the Washington agreement, there was still hope. They should have mobilised around concrete demands. For instance, they criticised the agreement, but they did not suggest any alternative. They should have started answering the immediate needs of the

people, like mobilising about prisoners (every family has its own prisoners), against taxes. They should have started building the community-based daily struggles — not even against Arafat, but against the occupation and not necessarily military.

Take the elections. The left is against holding them, and keeps saying no. But elections are going to be held, and the people in the streets do not know what the arguments of the left against the elections are. Why cannot they use the elections ? why cannot they say: "Yes to elections, but under conditions", so that people can understand clearly what the left wants ?

Another part of the problem is that the left gets orders from its leaderships abroad, while people on the spot know much better.

● How has the Israeli left been affected by the decline of the Palestinian left ?

When we speak of the Israeli left, we have to distinguish always between the so-called Zionist left and the non-Zionist and anti-Zionist left, which is very much smaller, to be sure. The Zionist left is no longer in the opposition, because it supports Rabin. Meretz, the civil rights movement, sits in the government while Rabin is torturing and doing other things they used to protest against. But there is also no prominent progressive, non-Zionist opposition force.

The anti-Zionist left joined a protest movement, which does not reject the accords altogether, but mobilises around concrete issues, like against settlements, Greater Jerusalem, etc. Our weakness is that, while doing so, we do not explain our whole programme and criticise the Palestinian Authority. There was no political force, including Matzpen, that spoke firmly and unequivocally against the Washington accords and explained to those few hundreds who were willing to listen, what the agreement really is. There is no Israeli mobilisation force which calls for cooperation with the anti-accords Palestinian left. This should have been the role of the real left in Israel now.

Instead, we are only joining with forces that accept the agreement, that call it a 'peace process', and this blurs the few hundreds who listen to us. We should struggle both against the occupation and against the Washington agreement, which implies the continuation of the occupation. No force inside Israel does it, not even among the Palestinians inside Israel.

Here you can see the absurdity of two left movements, which concentrated almost exclusively on the national

dimension: the anti-Zionists inside Israel, with the years, neglected all the international, anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist and class dimensions. You can hardly hear people speaking in class terms, analysing the Israeli society in class terms. We utilised the slogan: "the way to class struggle inside Israel passes through the national conflict", and with that, we adopted the conception of us as a group which deals only with the national issue. As for the Palestinian left, they render only lip service to Marxism. Here we meet: on a purely nationalistic conception of the issue.

The Israeli protest movement against the occupation would not have existed without us, but they are not hearing our unique voice. We used to say that the Israeli society has its own objective built-in contradictions: class, ethnic, gender. Without that we could never talk of joint struggle with the Palestinians: the oppressed Israeli masses, the women, the *mizrahim* [Oriental Jews], the workers have an objective interest in abolishing Zionism. But why then should we combine only with the middle class left Zionists, who are less interested in ending the Zionist state. The *mizrahim* majority of blue-collar workers are talking about Zionism and their oppression, doing community work, and we never refer to them. We never relate to the working class.

We should seek to work with these strategic allies whose objective interests are anti-Zionist. Building a movement exclusively upon the objective contradiction between humanistic values and occupation is not Marxist.

We have reached a stage where we need a thorough rethinking! ★

Notes

1. Revolutionary Communist League, Fourth International Section in the Israeli state

2. 40% of land in Gaza, the most fertile parts, are held by the Israelis, as are 70% of lands in the West Bank.

Sweep away the regime !

Interview with PADS leader Landing Savané

● *What is the current political situation in Senegal ?*

There is a very peculiar situation, because Abdoulaye Wade, the leader of the Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS), who was the main opposition leader, has just joined the government. As a result, there are now only three opposition MPs of the total of 120 and the only credible opposition party in Senegal which can fill the vacuum left by the PDS is now our African Party for Democracy and Socialism (PADS). This is a big challenge for our party, which has, since March, thrown itself into organizing a major grassroots campaign in order to widen its base of support and form the new central political force around which the Senegalese opposition can get organized.

The 50% devaluation of the Communauté financière Africaine (CFA) franc in 1994 has made the situation even more difficult: the consequent price rises have fuelled rampant inflation and misery among the people. This background of poverty and misery that our party faces — which enjoys potential support from the Senegalese masses, but lacks resources — requires an enormous effort.

● *Doesn't Wade's entry into the government call into question PADS' alliance policy with his PDS, particularly given that this same government has already gone ahead with price rises and privatization of some parts of the public sector ?*

The government in which Wade is participating is dominated by the Senegalese Socialist Party (PSS), which has been in power for 35 years. Wade's entry will not mean any basic shift in government policy, it simply means that the opposition has been neutralized. President Diouf has brought Wade into the government to reduce the threat of social unrest and all the evidence suggests that Wade is ready to play that role.

However, it should be made clear that even before the formation of the coalition with Wade and others, we knew and said



Landing Savané addressing the 14th World Congress of the Fourth International, May 1995

that Wade would end up in the government. Our tactic was firstly to postpone that moment for as long as possible, so as to make the vulnerability of the ruling party as clear as possible to the people of Senegal and, secondly, to make the Senegalese aware of the PDS' real nature and its inability to bring about real change in Senegal.

I think that the circumstances of Wade's entry into the government have allowed such an understanding, since he has won no new concessions from the PSS. The people of Senegal know that it was Abdou Diouf's regime which, in February 1994, had Abdoulaye Wade and myself arrested. So now they can't understand Wade joining this government, especially since

the PDS has achieved nothing concrete. Nor do I think that the Senegalese have hopes of this participation, which is why I think that our party's credibility is going to steadily increase and we will attract the electorate and part of the rank-and-file of the PDS, who want change and have had enough after 35 years of the PSS in power. We are now the only force in the country which has succeeded in sticking to its principles.

● *What does PADS propose regarding the austerity policy and the application of the structural adjustment programme ?*

We have raised demands in the student movement, in the face of the privatization of the universities resulting from IMF and World Bank policies.

On the industrial front, our central themes are the fight against the privatizations being prepared and defence of jobs.

The major concern of the peasantry is the rejection of price rises on inputs and the need for a rise in the prices they receive for their produce.

So, depending on the sector, there are concrete demands, but it all comes together around the effort to throw out the existing regime and work for the taking of power in order to advance the anti-imperialist revolution. This is the central plank of our work.

● *What is your position on Senegal's foreign debt?*

PADS thinks it is an unjust debt, but we are aware that cancelling the debt with this government means offering it new possibilities for corruption, a new lease of life. So we think that with the current government still there the debt should not be cancelled, as this would not benefit the people and the workers at all. If PADS were in power, it would do everything to cancel the debt. But cancelling the debt is not an absolute; it has to be looked at in relation to the existing political regime.

The balance of forces will not allow a PADS government alone to cancel the debt. We will have to negotiate with the creditors on relatively acceptable conditions so that this debt ceases to be a rope around our necks. It's clear that the economy of indebtedness in which we live today is unhealthy and makes development impossible. The prevailing system does not offer the prospect of development to the majority of Senegalese.

● *What is your view on the development of the Moustarchidat current ?*

This is not an Islamist or Islamic fundamentalist current. It's a Muslim organization which supported Abdou Diouf's candidacy in 1988 and which soon after saw that Diouf was not keeping his promises. In 1993 this organization decided to support Abdoulaye Wade who was the best-placed opposition leader in terms of replacing Diouf and it has continued to act as part of the opposition since.

Since Wade joined the government, this current has retreated into watchfulness. They have not publicly supported the move, and have said nothing publicly. They are deeply unhappy with the way the country is going. Traditionally in Senegal all the Muslim leaders support the existing government and the Moustarchidats were the first to form a Muslim religious organization which has broken with this tradition and publicly opposed the government. This is a very important novelty and may in the future encourage other similar religious movements. Senegal is a 95% Muslim country. Nothing is done there without the agreement of a number of key religious leaders and the progressive movement has to fight for the support of the most farsighted elements in the religious leadership, which includes people relatively conscious of development issues and with an interest in politics. PADS has links today with the heads of all the Muslim brotherhoods. We even have

● *PADS and international links*

Savané: Some of us in PADS do not have very much experience in the workings of international networks. This is true in my case. I have never belonged to an International. I have always been a Senegalese Pan-Africanist activist. This is a new experience which I am beginning to have through the work of the Fourth International (FI).

It was decided at the time of the unification of PADS that each component would keep its convictions, which means for some that they could continue to take part in international bodies if they did so before. This is true in particular for the comrades linked to the Fourth International. All this enriches the thinking and work of the party as a whole. It is beneficial for all of us to be able to discuss in a non-sectarian and undogmatic way.

We very much appreciated the FI's campaign when I was in prison with other Senegalese oppositionists. The FI's action contributed to isolating the Senegalese regime and forcing it to release us. We

activists amongst them and believe that in the future we will be in a position to mobilize significant religious layers in the fight for change and that they have a role to play in the transitional period we are in.

We must build a relatively strong and integrated state and nation which can tackle the question of a more egalitarian and just economic development model in the decades ahead.

● *PADS is the fruit of the fusion of several organizations. What is your assessment of this process so far ?*

The PADS unification congress was in December 1991. There were two groups from the Trotskyist tradition and two from the Maoist one. The fusion came at the end of several years of moving closer. In 1982 the Socialist Workers Organization (OST — Senegalese section of the Fourth International) supported my candidacy in the presidential elections, which made it possible for us to work together subsequently. Thus the unification came after a long period of collaboration, which makes the unification a durable one. Now unification is a reality, we are shoulder to shoulder in the struggles and there is a common PADS spirit. We are making an experiment which is quite original in African — perhaps in world — terms. We are very satisfied with the experience and its practical results on the ground. ★

also appreciate the interest shown by the FI in what we are doing in Senegal and we hope to improve the quality of our dialogue with the FI so that it better understands our work and can help us by using its international network to gain a wider audience for our activities.

We also have relations with others who are further from us ideologically, but who are interested in what we are doing and clearly see that we are a progressive force in Senegal which merits coverage in the international press. But it is incontestable that the FI, with its ideological and programmatic foundations, is capable of helping us in a far more disinterested, far more practical and powerful way than others who are not so close to our anti-imperialist fight.

For the 1993 election campaign we benefited from a certain amount of cooperation with the FI comrades from the material point of view. We need constant support; Senegal is a poor country ★

Far right gains in municipal elections

The most significant — and disturbing — result of France's June municipal elections was the victory of the far-right National Front in three southern cities including Toulon, a major naval port with over 130,000 inhabitants. This is the first city government

of this size in Europe to come under far right control since the second world war. The party of Jean-Marie Le Pen also doubled its number of municipal councillors throughout the country. *Keith Mann reports on the challenge ahead for anti-fascists*

The elections also revealed the fragility of the right wing majority which controls both houses of parliament and now the presidency. The conservative coalition of the neo-Gaullist Rally for the Republic (RPR) and the Union of French Democracy (UDF) was hoping that the victory of Jacques Chirac in the May presidential elections would create enough momentum to assure it widespread victories in the municipal elections. But the victory of the Socialist Party (PS) in a number of important cities as well as six of the twenty local Paris governments, all of which had been under right wing control for years, supports the analysis that Chirac's relatively narrow victory over PS candidate Lionel Jospin (53.6 to 43.2%) was more a victory by default over a badly discredited PS than a widespread enthusiastic show of support for the neo-liberal policies of the right.

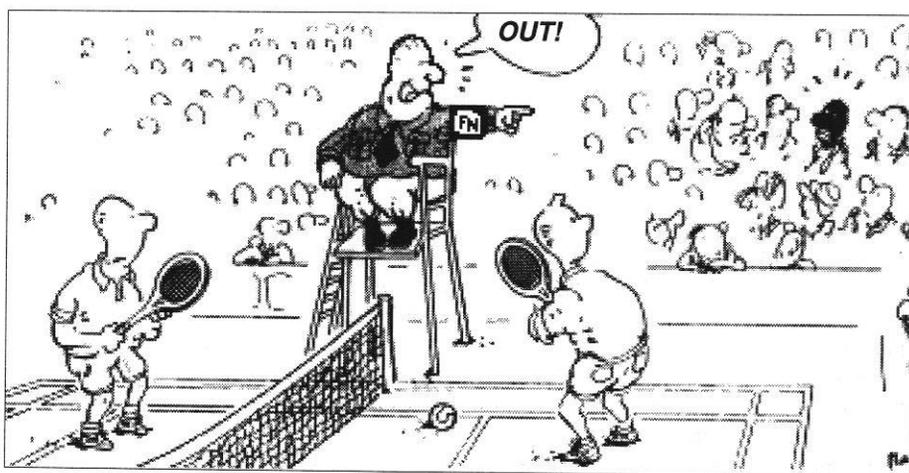
The PS managed to hold off concerted right wing challenges in such important cities as Lille, Mulhouse and Clermont Ferrand where former president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing of the UDF hoped to unseat the PS mayor. The PS also managed to defeat long-time conservative mayors in a number of cities including Rouen and Tours. But the failure of the PS to oppose the conservative parties on the basis of a clear left wing alternative to the attacks by the government of Chirac's prime minister Alain Juppé on hard won social gains indicates that many of the voters who choose the PS did so more out of opposition to the right than out of genuine support for the Socialist Party. Those hoping that the Communist Party (PC) would benefit from the relatively good showing of its presidential candidate Robert Hue (who received just under 9%, an improvement over recent PC electoral efforts) were disappointed. The PC failed to make headway and even lost control over the Norman port city Le Havre which it had controlled for years, though it was slightly compensated by victory in the

relatively large southern city Nimes.

The results were also disappointing for those who hoped that the excellent score of Lutte Ouvriere (LO — Workers' Fight) candidate Arlette Laguillier who scored 5.3% in the first round of the presidential elections would be the basis of a broad left wing pole of opposition to the neo-liberalism of the right and the Social Democracy. Hopes along these lines were raised when Arlette publicly called for the building of a "large party." However, in the weeks following that declaration LO made it clear that its idea of a large party was a simple extension of its own active

been filled by the right.

The week separating the two rounds was dominated by speculation around the possibility of National Front (NF) victories in a number of cities and the attitudes of the main parties in cities where the elections were "triangular," that is with contests pitting candidates from the UDF or RPR, the PS or PC and the FN. Le Pen clearly relished his role as "arbiter" taking a cynical pleasure in sowing confusion in the ranks of the "respectable" right wing parties and hoping to attract some of their voters. For example, though Le Pen and most currents of the FN usually favor a



but small, tightly knit organization rather than a genuine effort to work with other anti-capitalist forces for a new political force to the left of the PS and the PC. This was reflected in the municipal elections themselves. LO refused offers to run joint slates with other forces including the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) French section of the Fourth International. In most cases it failed to improve on its usual 2-3%. Worse yet, its insistence on running against the LCR in several cities such as Saint Denis, a working class suburb north of Paris, contributed to the loss of the LCR's two municipal councillors there whose seats have now

hard line against the RPR and the UDF, differentiating themselves as much as possible from these parties — even against such figures as former Interior Minister Charles Pasqua whose words and deeds are close to the far right — Le Pen ostentatiously offered to support to Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in his bid to unseat the PS incumbent in Clermont Ferrand. Though the UDF declined to accept Le Pen's offer there is no guarantee that the mainstream right will not collaborate with the FN in the future.

Speculation during the period separating the two rounds centered around the southern city of Vitrolles where there was

France

a possibility that Bruno Mégret, number two in the FN, might translate his near 50% score in the first round into a victory in the second, and on Mulhouse in Alsace in Eastern France where the FN also threatened to win. Though the FN narrowly failed to win these cities it did win three significant elections in Toulon, Marignane, and Orange. One could also add Nice to the list. The new mayor there recently left the FN in search of a more "respectable" political label, without however, renouncing his agreement with FN ideology.

Although the FN did not enjoy a big advance overall in terms of votes in relation to the presidential elections where it polled 15% nation-wide, these electoral victories represent a new stage in its progression. The FN has had elected officials in municipal councils, regional assemblies, the national parliament and the European parliament for years. But its isolation from other political formations has meant that these posts have only served as tribunes for the FN to spew its racist propaganda. The danger now is that it will use its control of city councils and the mayor's office in these cities to actually implement its openly anti-immigrant policies of "national preference."

These FN victories represent a new phase in the struggle against Le Pen and the FN and in defense of France's immigrant population. FN strategists claimed prior to the elections that municipal victories for its party would be the first step toward power in France as a whole. And FN leaders gave a frank indication of what they mean by national preference. Marie-France Stirbois, FN candidate in the city of Dreux told *Le Monde* that "if a (housing) seeker is French, they will receive a lodging. If it is a foreigner, he will be sent to the back of the line." Asked what he would do if elected mayor of Vitrolles, Bruno Mégret said he planned to increase the police force and assign it the task of creating a "climate of insecurity" for "delinquents" — often a code word for youths of immigrant origin. Mégret also said that if elected the city government in Vitrolles would take all possible measures to stop "the arrival of new immigrants in the city" and "gradually reduce the number of immigrants already present through a housing policy which would give priority to French families."

On election night, Le Pen crowed that these cities were the first "liberated" cities in the country. But the FN will now have the burden of proving to its electorate that it is capable not only of denouncing immigrants as the source of all of the

country's problems, but implementing its program and actually running public affairs. This has already led to differences within the organization. Le Pen himself favors immediate, strident measures to exclude immigrants from access to municipal housing lists and other city services. Others, including Le Chevalier, the new FN mayor in Toulon, are sensitive to the contradiction between the FN program and existing French legislation prohibiting the kind of open discrimination proposed in the FN program. While Le Pen proposes a sort of civil disobedience by which the mayors would ignore the authority of the local Paris-appointed prefect in favor of a higher "national interest" (another FN leader talked about a "showdown with the state"), Le Chevalier hopes to find ways to implement discrimination against the immigrants within the limits of the law. In any event immigrants with or without papers — especially youth who have long been victimized by police brutality — can expect an even a harder time in these cities.

The new situation opened up by these FN victories also constitutes a challenge for anti-racist and anti-fascist individuals and organizations to adapt existing forms of mobilization and opposition to the FN.

For example many cultural festivals are held in Southern France during the summer months. Should artists and musicians should perform in Toulon, Marignane and Orange? Popular singer Patrick Bruel (who is of North African Jewish origin) has stated his intention to boycott the FN cities earning himself an angry antisemitic outburst from Le Pen. Singer Charles Aznavour has called the idea of a boycott "ridiculous." Other performers plan to shift events planned in these cities to nearby localities as a way of protesting the FN without punishing the large numbers of voters who did vote against the FN.

A similar debate is taking place on the left from the PS to anti fascist activists and revolutionary socialists. Some have proposed boycotting these cities as a way of pressuring those who voted for the FN. Others have advanced the argument that this would amount to abdicating from a political struggle within these localities and leave the immigrant population vulnerable to city government-inspired attacks and violence.

Clearly, measures must be taken in solidarity with, and defense of, the immigrants in these cities who are often grouped in miserable ghettos rampant with poverty and unemployment. This involves monitoring and denouncing every instance of discrimination against them. Defense of

immigrants as the most vulnerable element in French society is an elementary duty of socialists. And united action by all democratic forces under the leadership of the parties of the left, the trade unions and anti-racist and anti-fascist organizations around the principle of "an injury to one is an injury to all" would be a powerful weapon against the FN. This is because the FN's anti immigrant racism and xenophobia is only the most visible part of its program; the type of society that the FN would like to bring about also involves frontal assaults on the rights of workers gays, lesbians and women. Widespread support for such a united front would also bar the way to the development of the type of "Republican Front" between the parties of the right and the PS and PC which has already been proposed. Such an alliance would blunt the fight against the far right by tying the left parties to the right wing ones and detaching them from their natural allies in the trade unions and progressive organizations. It would thus cede leadership of the fight against the FN to the same right wing parties whose policies in government have been strikingly anti-immigrant.

This is why effective opposition to the FN will also involve a broad political campaign of education amongst the large numbers of workers who have been swayed by Le Pen's scapegoating of immigrants for unemployment and "insecurity." This facile demagoguery must be opposed with arguments demonstrating that unemployment is the result of the capitalist crisis and the austerity policies instituted by the parties of the right and the left. Ultimately, this is inseparable from the struggle to build a mass anti-capitalist party to the left of the PS and the CP. Much work needs to done; the FN receives more working class votes today than any other party.

The coming weeks and months will be rich in experience for the fight against the FN. The stakes are high for all sides, not only in France, but internationally. While the victory of the FN in three cities has certainly encouraged racists and fascists internationally, a powerful movement against the ideas and practices of the FN in a country once proud of its reputation as the birth place of the ideals of human rights will also educate and inspire those throughout the world who are fighting against racism and fascism. ★

Left unites: First Congress of the Unified Socialist Party (BSP)

(Ankara, 16 June 1995) — Veiled women and children queue in front of an embroidery exhibition organised by the (Islamic fundamentalist) Refah Party, which took control of the municipal government in April last year.¹ Just across the road, a dozen fashionably-dressed policemen go through the bags of some 1,000 participants in the first congress of the Unified Socialist Party (BSP).

The Turkish paradox is that the bloody military dictatorship is over, but the laws have hardly changed. In practice, this conference of the far left can be held legally (with the participation of a government commissioner). At the same time the Kurdish people continue to suffer the most atrocious repression.

The atmosphere in the hall is serious, with moments of real tension. The stakes are high for all the Turkish left. Divided and decimated in the 1980s by the dictatorship, all the left groups have behind them a period of extremely sectarian debates, sometimes of physical confrontations. But now the majority of the anti-capitalist left has decided to create a new party. According to newly-elected president Sadun Aren, the BSP "is an expression of the need for a real opposition to the attacks of the bourgeoisie and imperialism on the Turkish working class. These attacks showed the irrelevance of almost all the traditional differences between the right wing parties and social democracy."

The Unified Socialist Party (BSP) unites over ten formerly independent groups. The two largest currents in the new party are the Communists of the SBP (itself a regrouping of three former pro-Moscow parties) and Liberation (Kurtulus), the largest of the revolutionary Marxist movements of the 1970s. But the BSP also includes a number of smaller Communist currents, as well as Yeniyol, Turkish section of the Fourth International. (Congress also approved the process of convergence with Dev Yol, a similarly sized organisation which has so



Istanbul, 1st May 1995,

far declined to join the BSP.)

According to Sadun Aren, "most of our component currents were very weak before we unified. We were unable to construct any real resistance to the coup d'état. And we paid heavily for our weakness and our internal divisions... And after the collapse of the USSR, a vacuum, or at least a turbulence, appeared in the ideological sphere. There were new questions to answer. We needed to discuss with each other about what conception of socialism, about how to renovate our project."

The BSP has just over 3,000 members in some 39 municipalities. 20% of delegates to the first congress were

women. Half were blue or white collar workers.

There is no attempt to build the BSP in the Kurdish regions of the South East. The party denounces the military repression, and defends the right of the Kurdish people to self-determination. At the same time, BSP militants are more than reserved about the policy and behaviour of the hegemonic PKK (Kurdish Workers' Party), which in any case is hardly interested in the Turkish workers' movement.

The congress was marked by a number of moving meetings with older political and trade union militants, with their bitter experience of prison, torture, exile or the

Yeniyol inside the BSP: by Masis Kürkçüglü

"We animate a platform of comrades of various origins who share certain of our orientations. We have not renounced our [Trotskyist] programmatic identity and organisational structure, and we continue to publish our own magazine and pamphlets. But we do not consider ourselves an institutionalised tendency in the BSP. Our platform should serve as a base for discussion on how best to build the BSP. Yeniyol is only a small group inside the BSP. But we did well in the election of the leadership [Masis won the largest single number of votes, while the student comrade Özlem O. was the highest scoring female candidate (fifth highest overall)]. Our contacts and debates with the other sections of the Fourth International give us a serious advantage in the BSP debates, and we are generally considered to be a dynamic element, able to propose fresh orientations on all the essential subjects." A view which seems to be confirmed by Erdal Kara, a leader of the Kurtulus (Liberation) current: "Kurtulus and Yeniyol are the currents which defend the ideas closest to the declared aims and spirit of the BSP. Our ideas and our way of doing things is somewhat different from that of the other currents." ★

Sosyalist Demokrasi İçin Yeniyol
The Turkish-language magazine for Marxists and feminists
Tumacıbası sok 31/1, 80 050 Beyoğlu, Turkey .1 year 300,000 TL plus postage

armed struggle. Some 'old Stalinists' remarked how strange — and good — it was to find themselves in one room with 'Trotskyists'.

"Some people accused the BSP of being a confederation, where the various currents 'stitch up' the leadership as a kind of cartel," says Yeniyo leader Masis Kürkçügül. "In fact, 'independents' won over 20% of leadership positions, which is rather high considering their real weight in the party. But both major currents [SBP and Kurtulus] realised it was important to give 'independents' a real place. I would also note that we did not need to apply our rule of a minimum 30% quota for women in the leadership. In fact, delegates spontaneously elected a rather higher proportion of women.

"Some debates were about our past differences. But most debates were about our future. For example, Congress refused to move towards a doctrinaire party form, with a rigid programme written in the corridors of the congress by the top ideologues of each current. Delegates preferred to continue a process of formation of the thinking and collective will of the party through the struggles we are engaged in and the common reflection of the largest number of militants.

"There was no significant divergence on the central political resolutions, which gives us stable common ground for developing BSP activities. A few groups resigned from the leadership of the party, I think mainly because of their poor results in the election of the [100 member] Central Committee. But none of them tried to oppose the construction of the party, and their frustration seems to be a secondary phenomenon."

"The different origins and traditions of our various components is a real problem," says Erdal Kara, leader of the Kurtulus (Liberation) current. "But it is neither realistic nor necessary for us to fuse quickly. Not realistic because the differences of the past cannot be overcome so easily. And not necessary because this diversity is a source of richness, and a guarantee for the future. The only way to achieve a real synthesis of the various currents is to intensify the BSP's political activities, and for each of the currents to adopt positions on these concrete activities, rather than about the divergences of the past.

"We should also understand that the debates we have had between ourselves so far don't interest anyone outside the BSP. These debates don't make much sense to the workers. What they like about the new party is that, after being divided for so many years, the socialist currents have finally come together to do real politics. This is the *sine qua non* of our existence. If we forget this, the internal life of the BSP will be transformed into a vicious circle of bitter debates, paralysing our political action. I don't pretend that the difference in the political positions of the various currents is unimportant. But the last 18 months show that the only fertile debate is that which is based on common activities." ★

1. Refah also controls the municipal governments of Istanbul and Izmir. An analysis of their record in local government will be published in the September 1995 issue of *International Viewpoint*.

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The Revolution Betrayed

New Czech-language edition

Zrazená revoluce — Co je SSSR a kam speje?

New corrected translation¹, overseen by Anna Sabatova. Introductions by Jaroslav Sabata and Petr Uhl. Doplnek, Brno, 1995 (264p.) 126 Kc/\$5 US. ISBN 80-85765-30-6. Published with the financial support of the Marguerite Bonnet foundation.

[Extracts from the Postscript by Petr Uhl]

Trotsky completed *The Revolution betrayed* in August 1936. It was first published in French that same year. The book — probably his most important single work — was first published in Czech in 1937². The Russian manuscript was only published (under the title *What is the USSR and where is it going?*) in 1972, by the Paris-based Slovo publishing house, close to the Fourth International.³

"Bureaucratic rule must give way to council (Soviet) democracy," wrote Trotsky. The idea that such a change must be revolutionary, because the political system is not capable of a democratic renaissance through its own forces, through its own institutions, became at least an alternative in this country where enlightenment in the 1960s, and particularly the quasi-revolutionary expression of that reform in Spring 1968 was suffocated by Soviet tanks and domestic capitulation. This alternative seemed to many people if not more realistic, then certainly more attractive than a convergence with contemporary capitalism, to say nothing of a return to the bourgeois order of the pre-war period.

It is true that the Czechoslovak independent movement of the 1970s and 1980s adopted a gradualist conception, according to which the liberalisation of the system... was supposed to lead to parliamentary democracy and to a combined market-planned economy. But alongside these reformist theories there were also a range of revolutionary Marxist positions, drawing on Trotsky, Gramsci, Luxemburg, Deutscher, the Belgrade Praxis group, and Kuron and Modzelewski's work of the first half of the 1960s.

Supporters of these ideas referred to the anti-bureaucratic struggles of the 1950s and 1960s, (Berlin 1953, Poznan 1956, Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968) and to the student movements of the 1960s (Poland, Germany, Yugoslavia, France, Mexico, Japan).

In Czechoslovakia in the 1970s and 1980s, the idea of social self-management developed in combination with a socialist (or at least non-capitalist) oriented political revolution. Those who supported these far-left views participated in the theoretical discussions in the independent movement about the reformability and non-reformability of the bureaucratic dictatorship and bureaucratic centralism. These polemics had a practical meaning in defining the political positions of Charter 77, particularly in the years leading up to 1989. They also played a role in the foundation of the Obroda socialist club and the liberal-socialist Movement for Civic Liberty (HOS) and in the activities of the Democratic Initiative (DI) petition movement.⁴

In political terms, however, the anti-Stalinist and non-reformist left in Czechoslovakia had almost nothing in the past to build on. The Left Opposition (LO) of the late 1930s was a small group, and the most well-known Czechoslovak "Trotskyists" Zavis Kalandra and Karel Teige were not members, though they co-operated with the group. Nor were Kalandra and Teige's anti-Stalinist positions identical with those of Trotsky and the Fourth International.

Having said this, one could still identify in the 1970s and 1980s a cultural-political tradition created in the 1930s by several hundred "irreverent" left wing intellectuals, which to differing extents and at different periods opposed Stalinism, or its worst crimes. This tradition was the motor behind the high demand in pre-WW2 Czechoslovakia for Trotsky's works, and in particular for his criticisms of Stalinism. In just seven years, from 1930 until the 1937 edition of *The Revolution Betrayed*, an unbelievable fifteen of Trotsky's books were published.⁵ This is an unique record, both for a country and for a language, over such a short period of time.

Then came the war, and the years of non-freedom. Even the overcast freedom of 1945-48 did not allow the publication of any more of Trotsky's works. The pro-Soviet Czech society would not have supported Trotsky's heresy. This was not unusual at that time — George Orwell had big difficulties having his *Animal Farm* published in England after the war too. It was not thought appropriate to disturb the anti-Hitler coalition. This was certainly a view shared by the overwhelming majority of left-wing Czechoslovak intellectuals.

The witch-hunt of Trotskyists after February 1948 (the most significant moment of which was the judicial murder of Zavis Kalandra in 1950) did not hit the existing Trotskyists (unlike the similar trials in the USSR). The anti-Trotsky campaign was just an ideological label for the repressive charade which Stalinism used to strengthen its power.

The first information about revolutionary Marxism available to the post-war Czechoslovak public had to wait until Spring of 1968, when the student newspaper *Studentske listy* serialised Isaac Deutscher's *Stalin*, and *Literarni listy* published *The Unfinished Revolution (Nedokoncena revoluce)* by the same author. The student and worker storms in many countries of the world during 1968 presented the Czechoslovak public with another interpretation of Trotskyism — as a political movement for social self-management. Revolutionary Marxism came to be understood, like in other parts of the world, as one of the orientations of the wide anti-authoritarian current in society, which drew not only from Lenin, Mao Zedung and Che Guevara, but also Bakunin and even Freud, Fromm and Marcuse.

A new, modern Czech translation of *The Revolution Betrayed* was prepared at this time by Lubomir Sochora. It was supposed to be published as the first title of the *Flames (Plamene)* series, a monthly publishing project of the Czechoslovak Union of Writers. The editors expected it to be the first and last title before the series was banned. But 'normalisation' spread more quickly than 'Flames' — the magazine was banned in April 1968, and the new version of *The Revolution Betrayed* was never published.

The editors of the 1970s, Berlin-based revolutionary socialist magazine *Information Materials (Informacni materialy)* clearly did not have this new translation at their disposal. This group, (some close to the Fourth International) came together under the influence of the 1971 Prague trials of Petr Uhl and others. These students and young people, left-oriented anti-Stalinism and non-reformists, including some Trotskyists, were sentenced to up to four years for their activities in the anti-normalisation Revolutionary Youth Movement (HRM). The Czech and German editors of *Information Materials*, with the help of their West German and French comrades, reprinted the original 1937 translation of *The Revolution Betrayed* in 1974. Several hundred copies were smuggled into Czechoslovakia. [...]. Several dozen copies of the new, Sochora translation were printed in samizdat at the beginning of the 1980s.⁶

Notes

1 This revised translation corrects a number of imperfections in the original Burian and 1960s Sochora translations, and standardises the 'socialist' terminology to reflect developments in the Czech language over the last 50 years.

2 *Zrazena revoluce*, published by nakladatelství Ladislava Sotka, Prague. Translation by Vladimir Burian.

3 Some 1,000 facsimiles of the original Russian manuscript were published in Paris in 1972. There was a second, larger print run in 1988.

4 Including *Memories (Pameti, 1930)*, *Permanent Revolution (Permanentni revoluce, 1930)*, *The Falsified Revolution (Zfalšikovaná revoluce, 1930)*. A 1,000 page three volume edition of the *History of the Russian Revolution (Dejiny ruske revoluce)* was published by Frantisek Borovy in 1934 (one volume covering 1905 and two covering 1917).

5 Dissident opposition groups formed in the 1980s. For a detailed discussion of their programmes and activities see Czech *Inprekor* issues 6-10.

6 Thanks to the historian Karel Bartosek, some of them by the *Krtek a datel* samizdat publishing centre of Jaroslav and Danda Suk.

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Meet the challenge of the bomb!

by Jean-Louis Michel

Fifty years after the nuclear bombardment of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, 35 years after the explosion of the first French bomb at Reggane in Algeria [at that time a French colony], 10 years after the sabotage of the Rainbow Warrior, and only a few weeks after the prolongation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Chiracism shows its true colours without the slightest complex.

The reasons for this provocation are hardly mysterious. First, there is the flash of lightning from a zealous has-been, boasting of its force with tough gestures on the eve of a number of important international meetings, in Washington, Halifax and Cannes. Pathetic! After all, [French President Jacques] Chirac is hardly the General De Gaulle. Nor is 1990s nuclear arms policy based on the same calculation as the General's 'I have the bomb, therefore I exist' mentality.

Second, there is of course the 'unpredictable' side of Jacques Chirac. This worried many of his backers even before his election as President [on 7 May 1995]. It has certainly added to the stupor this provocateur has generated in several European capitals.

The isolation of this country of ours, this caricature of dreams of faded greatness is revealed by our narrow-minded identity-crisis. And what a detestable identity we are proposed — part infected by Chirac, part infected by [National Front leader Jean-Marie] Le Pen.

The American-style mediatisation of the President's decision, and the anti-democratic obscenity which his 'I have decided' represents, irritate people's consciousness, here and abroad, much more than we might have expected. This is a new epoch.

The decision to explode eight nuclear devices is presented as something which will assure the reliability (i.e. prevent the obsolescence) of existing missiles. But we know that the goal is also to make possible the miniaturisation of nuclear devices, which will make it much easier to use them in a range of theatres of 'operations'¹

Chirac's predecessors tried several times to manage this reversal of 'traditional' nuclear deterrence policy, under constant pressure from the military hierarchy. [This is all about how to make nuclear weapons easier to use and] this is precisely why, if we don't stop these tests, we may see the development of a new arms race in some quite precise types of weapon.

For the time being, however, both the American and German governments have other technological and military priorities. But there is a possibility of substantial agreement between Paris and London. There could eventually

even be a shift in the system of military and political alliances in Europe.

And last but not least, of course, this has everything to do with the determination of this president and his party [RPR, conservative] not to take any risks with the trash of the National Front. Half an hour of prime time defence of the glory of La France, so bruised and tarnished by years of Socialist Party rule can only improve the rightist government's image among its potential supporters. Particularly when one fails to explain to these voters that grandeur has an economic and social cost.

The bomb already soaks up one third of military spending. And the armed forces take a massive 20% of the state budget. Not-counting the element of research spending which can be attributed to military projects. The bigger the bomb project, the harsher the austerity programme will be. But who cares?

This is the moment for a large, common initiative, bringing together men and women, young people, political parties, trades unions and other political institutions, citizens, cultural and religious organisations. There is a place for all those who refuse the logic of death, the logic of human and ecological disaster. Through a series of demonstrations, here and in other countries, we should spin out this campaign on the

international level. We should stop the restarting of the nuclear test programme. If we can't stop the start, we should stop it as soon as possible. The final goal remains, of course, the abolition of all nuclear weapons. But the first step is to preserve the moratorium on tests. ★

This article is the editorial of the French weekly *Rouge*, from 15 June 1995

1. See "US used radioactive bullets in 'Desert Storm'", in *International Viewpoint* #267, June 1995 p. 32.



The new peace movement

From Tahiti to Paris via Sidney and New Caledonia, people are organising to stop France's colonial and militarist nuclear adventure. The September issue of *International Viewpoint* (and our French language sister publication *Inprecor*) will survey the new peace movement in these and other countries 50 years after the outrage in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. You can order extra copies of this special issue from your regular IV seller or from the address on page two. But don't miss it! ★